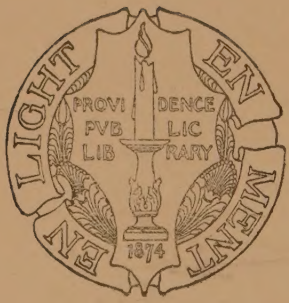
THE PASSING SHOW

HENRY RUSSELL



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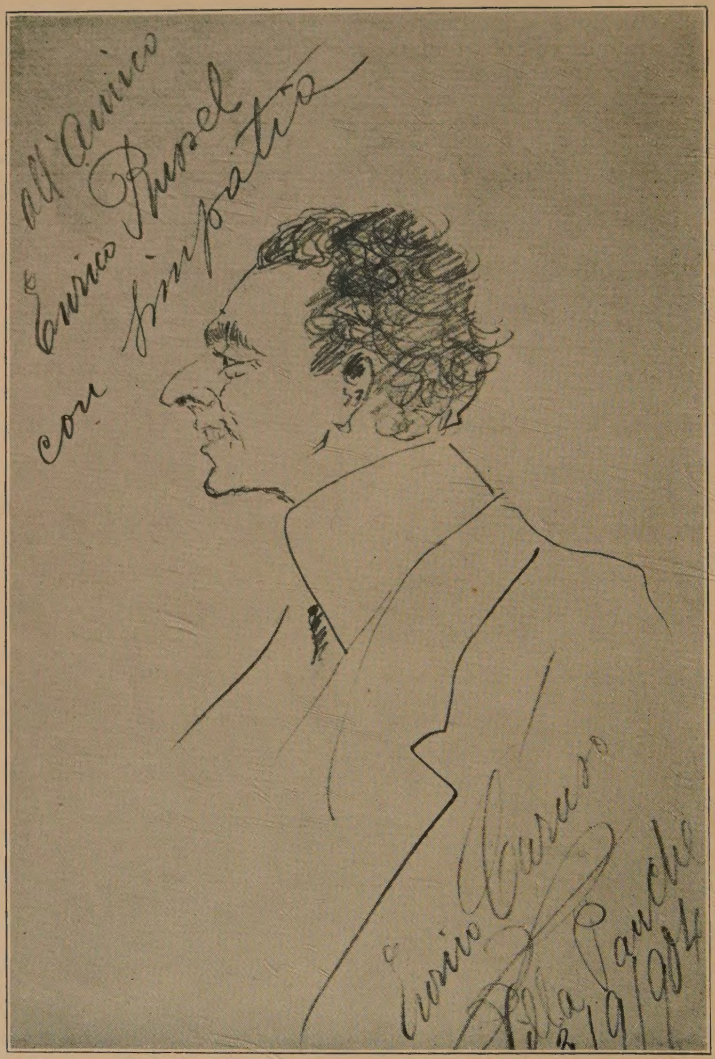

HENRY RUSSELL
From a caricature by Enrico Caruso

The Passing Show

By

HENRY RUSSELL

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

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TO
PATRICIA

My thanks are due to Miss Kathleen Sullivan
for assisting me to compile these memoirs

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THE PASSING SHOW

CHAPTER I

LONDON—TEACHING—EDWARDIAN SOCIETY

IN the days before bridge and dancing had been thought of as fashionable time absorbers, the gap was filled both in Mayfair and at provincial gatherings by the warbling of amateur singers. This pastime fostered the germs of what developed into a new disease, and singing-sickness, for I can call it nothing else, spread with deplorable rapidity. It was the antithesis of the present sleeping-sickness, a sort of vocal delirium that must in some mysterious fashion have proved an emotional outlet for the songstress, and, like sleeping-sickness, it was more or less incurable. It was extraordinary in those days how people with scarcely any voice were always ready to perform with the greatest assurance before their friends ; and the tenacity of the amateur singer is even now most incredible. I have seen wives alienated from their husbands, friends whose ears proved too sensitive scorned as jealous enemies, and entire families broken up by the determination of a man or woman to sing.

I must admit that I was not immune from this devastating disease myself. For many months I had studied singing with a Mr. Hugo Beyer, a master

of Swedish origin, and lavished time and money on his instructions, believing implicitly in his prophecies that in me he beheld a future Lasalle. Gradually, however, the truth dawned on me and my fury rose against the falseness of the prophet. Several well-meaning acquaintances, instead of realising that the discovery meant ultimate peace for others, reported my denunciation in a very exaggerated form to Mr. Beyer, who at once brought an action for libel against me, his plea being that I had publicly accused him of extorting money on false pretences.

The case came up in the Queen's Bench Division in 1897 before the Baron Pollock. Lord Carson, then Mr. Carson, was counsel for the plaintiff, and I was defended by Sir Edward Clarke. Much of the plaintiff's evidence proved to be mere tea-table tittle-tattle, and the witnesses were neither serious nor convincing. A verdict was returned in my favour—gratifying in all but one respect, which was that it proved that I would never make a singer, and, moreover, that never at any time had I been justified in the expectation.

What a waste of time could be avoided, and what bitter disappointments, if all aspiring artists were forced to prove, not only the existence, but the extent of their talents in a court of law before starting their careers.

But it is often from disillusionment that life takes its permanent colour. During the trial I had announced that I was a singing teacher in a "pathological sense," and this after having studied for some time the art of breathing and the physiology of the throat. The Press, though it much made sport of

the trial itself, gave this fact wide publicity; and when I ceased to receive vocal instruction and began to give it, I found that I had achieved a reputation without effort, and my pupils multiplied rapidly. In a few months they included such eminent singers as Nordica, Ben Davies and dear old Kennerley Rumford. Politicians and actors consulted me about their speaking voices, and among other delightful people I was able to help were Charles Wyndham, Beerbohm Tree and Mary Moore. Dr. Lyttelton, then headmaster of Haileybury, became an enthusiastic believer in the importance of scientific breathing and clear articulation. At his request I often gave lectures at Haileybury.

It was about this time that Charles Scott-Gatty brought a youthful friend to see me and asked me to try his voice. It was young Gervase Elwes, who had recently married Lady Winefrede Feilding, the daughter of Lord Denbigh. They lived quite near me in Curzon Street. Elwes was the fortunate possessor of a fine tenor-baritone voice and a responsive artistic temperament. Being also a naturally cultivated person, this translated itself into his voice and gave it an unusual charm and finish. It was my pleasure to teach him for two years, and he afterwards triumphed on the concert stage in many parts of the world. His tragic death was an irreparable loss to all those who loved music.

Rachel, Lady Dudley was another of my talented pupils, and once caused me hours of acute apprehension. She always wore a string of very large and beautiful pearls, which she removed when she sang. One afternoon she returned breathless, saying

she had forgotten the necklace. Every nook and corner of the room was searched, detectives were sent for from Scotland Yard, the servants held under suspicion, and for twenty-four hours consternation reigned. It was not until the next afternoon that I found the pearls nestling beneath the strings of the grand piano where they had slipped during the lesson.

In those days it took a fair amount of courage to tell people that they could not sing, and as a result of this honesty I made many rather bitter personal enemies ; for there are two things about which the gods commanded me to be outspoken—food and singing. One must be swallowed, the other listened to, and indigestion and discord are, each of them, too high a price to pay for flattery. My advice to voiceless aspirants has always been, "Never try to be what you are not ; but try to find out what you are and develop that."

Gobineau has called man " l'animal méchant par excellence " ; and another pessimist said that " man is the only animal who causes pain to others without any further purpose than just to cause it."

This gentleman must have suffered from having as a neighbour an earnest amateur singer. A friend of mine who had this unfortunate experience was driven to such desperation that he followed the offender till the opportunity came to pin on his back a label which bore the words, "Don't do to others what you would not like done to yourself." This should be given as a prescription to those suffering from singing-sickness.

Teachers are, I admit, more often to blame than

pupils by encouraging innocents who have not enough voice for a third-rate chorus to believe that they are future Pattis or Carusos. This should be made a punishable offence. Such a type of charlatan takes in more money than a fashionable fortune-teller, causes infinitely more domestic havoc—and yet is within the law! Happily, there are not many of them, in spite of the unfortunately certain profits that awaits this form of sycophancy.

In earlier days masters of *il bel canto* were as popular as psycho-analysts are now, and the most notable figure in this group was Paolo Tosti. A small man—rather thick set—square shoulders—compact figure—large bluish-grey eyes—gleaming white hair—a slightly Jewish cast of face, which is typically Neapolitan—a large mobile mouth with ugly blackened teeth—a cigar dangling from its corner—a distinctly cynical expression, breaking at times into a broad good-natured smile—such a man was Tosti when I first met him. He told the most amusing, and quite improper, stories I have ever heard. But they were always acceptable on account of the manner of the telling, and the inimitable humour of his expression. He was doubtless one of the most gifted teachers of his time, absolutely frank and fearless, and though his pupils included many who had little talent, he never hesitated to enlighten them as to how badly they sang. Never have I known a man of more buoyant spirits and irrepressible humour. He was adored by the royal family and became the idol of London society thirty years ago. His enemies accused him of being a snob, but at heart he was an artist and a Bohemian, one of his

chief delights being to torment and expose those who patronised music for fashion's sake.

In spite of my career as a singer being literally "still-born," Tosti's love of a practical joke was responsible for my being introduced in a London drawing-room as a musical celebrity. One November afternoon he and I were feeling our way along Lansdowne Passage towards Berkeley Street. Tosti was nervous. He had lived in London for thirty years and knew but six words of our language, but used them all in heartfelt condemnation of the fog. On this occasion nothing would induce him to cross the road, though our destination was close by. So we sat on a cold, damp doorstep, waiting for the fog to lift or Tosti's panic to abate, becoming more chilled every moment. A door opened behind us, and someone spoke to a lady on the threshold.

"My dear, you simply can't go out in such weather!"

Tosti, recognising the voice, whispered to me, "We are saved!" Then rising from his undignified position on the step, he said in French, "Mon cher, I ask your hospitality. *We* cannot stay in this dreadful weather, either."

Lord Marcus Beresford recognised him immediately, and with Irish enthusiasm invited us to take refuge. The drawing-room, a rare combination of good taste, simplicity and comfort, delighted Tosti. His nervousness changed to vivacity and he became himself.

"Dear Duchess," he said, greeting a lady who showed signs of having once been beautiful, "destiny and fog have brought us to your door. I am now at your feet!"

The Duchess smiled, as the world did, at Tosti's gallantries.

Paolo then introduced me as *a great composer*, as yet unknown, and in a whispered aside inferred that I did not wish my name divulged.

" But how delightful !" cried the Duchess, who collected celebrities and at the moment had a passion for futurists. " An anonymous genius !" she cooed. " Can he be persuaded to play for us ?"

Tosti bent towards her confidentially. " Of course," he explained, " and in your hands he could become the lion of London. He writes music that no one can understand, and plays the piano so tactfully that even royalty is not offended !"

" Hush !" whispered the Duchess, alarmed. She glanced at a huge gilt chair occupied by a decorated and highly royal personage. " She has come to hear a compatriot. He sings out of tune, I am told, but she is quite deaf, and people always talk while there is music, so you will not have to listen. Perhaps your friend will play one of his compositions later on ?"

The wretch grinned with delight at my confusion. He knew that I had never written a note of music in my life, and was anything but desirous that my name be concealed, but he was enjoying the joke so thoroughly that I allowed him to have his own way. He was about to drag me to the piano, when a tall, thin and elaborately dressed woman entered the room. She was presented to the " personage." The Duchess whispered amazing things in her ear about Tosti and his friend : " Anonymous genius ! Musician of the future ! So exciting !"

The new arrival, we were informed, was an

amateur singer, famous for her vocal contributions to prisons and hospitals, which subsequently seemed to me entirely appropriate, because her audience was anchored. She deluged Tosti with raptures over his new song " Mattinata." Then the Duchess begged her to sing, but she pleaded that she must have tea first.

Our hostess turned to me and said quite seriously, " Her voice is so beautiful. Just like Melba on the gramophone !"

Tosti and I retired to a corner to discuss plans for a new musical movement in London, when we were startled by sounds like a cry of pain. At intervals the cry was repeated, then a low pathetic wail, then silence. We hurried to the drawing-room and our anxiety increased when we saw " the lady who sang like Melba on the gramophone " surrounded by a crowd of excited people. The guest of honour was pressing her hand.

" Quite beautiful, my dear," said the ' Personage,' holding her trumpet to her ear, " I have not heard such a voice since I was a girl. Won't you sing again ?"

The request was a command, so even poor Tosti did not escape. The song was, unfortunately, " Vorrei Morir," and the interpretation bore traces of distinct devotion to prisons and hospitals. Whether it was coincidence or some subtle sympathy between the internal and external forces of nature, I cannot say, but as soon as the song ceased the fog lifted ! Tosti approached the songstress, and taking her hand said, in that kindly but audible whisper of which only he was capable, " Madam, you have

wealth, beauty, breeding and a husband—you cannot expect to be a singer too !"

The Duchess, turning to me, said in a beseeching way, " I shall not be able to sleep to-night unless you play some of your compositions."

" They're good for insomnia," whispered Tosti, and edged towards the door. Alas ! it was impossible to follow him. I was held a prisoner. From the hall he waved farewell, and said softly, " You will be a lion, mon cher, and a London lion is always caged and fed at public expense. Grasp your opportunity and impose yourself and, above all, impose on others. I have opened the royal road to fortune. May you be as successful in every other fog." He left me to my fate, with a bow and a devilish grin.

The conclusion is brief. I had never composed in my life, I knew nothing about music and could only play by ear. I was dragged to the piano and implored, as only tea guests can implore, to air my compositions. As a last and desperate resort I improvised extravagant harmonies to " Ta-Ra-Ra, Boom-Di-A," then the popular song of the streets. The Duchess and her friends were enchanted, acclaiming me as a coming Wagner. Finally I escaped. To Tosti it was all very amusing. He told the story everywhere for weeks, and when I met friends I was greeted with " Grr-r ! Ta-Ra-Ra, Boom— !"

Such was my first experience of amateur music in a drawing-room. I had always avoided accepting invitations to functions of this kind, and now realised that I had been wise in doing so. But as time went on Tosti persuaded me to take some of his own

pupils, and these brought me more into contact with London society and the world of fashion. My pupils often became friends, and one whom I remember with great affection was Ian Malcolm, an extremely handsome man whose charm and wit made him a general favourite. He was at that time Lord Salisbury's private secretary. He afterwards married Mrs. Langtry's daughter, and has since been knighted.

About this time I made the acquaintance of Theodore Byard, who had an agreeable baritone voice, and sang with much charm and intelligence. Theo was a delightful and amusing companion. We often met at the opera and after the performance sometimes went to supper with Mrs. Bill Duncombe, who lived a few doors from me in Clarges Street. She was at that time one of my pupils and one of the prettiest and most attractive women in London. Her voice, a small, but sweet soprano, she used with considerable ability. Her mother was the beautiful, and once famous, Nellie Bromley, an actress of talent. She ultimately married Archie Stuart-Wortley, much of whose time was spent in painting his friends and caricaturing his enemies. There was no necessity for Mrs. Duncombe to take up singing as a profession, but she had inherited her mother's instinct for the stage and was so keen on appearing before the public that she determined to do so at any cost. In those days it was not so easy for a member of society to join the ranks of the Bohemians, but, with the help of a devoted husband, her chief ambition was realised.

After working for some time she obtained an

engagement at Covent Garden Opera House to sing Musette in " La Bohème." Among the friends who flocked to hear her were Theodore Byard, Ian Malcolm, Count Hermann Hatzfeldt, son of the German Ambassador to London, Lady Eden and the Lady Bective, one of the most distinguished and cultured women of her day. She was really a " grande dame," and combined the grace of youth with the dignity of age. Lady Eden was then in the zenith of her beauty, and I doubt whether the world has ever seen a more perfect specimen of a Greek head. It is something like a tragedy that a quarrel between Whistler and Sir William Eden deprived the world of a portrait which her brother, Robin Grey, told me was a masterpiece.

At the time of which I write I can remember that often three important concerts would take place on the same night at different well-known houses. A galaxy of great artists were to be heard at each one, and women of beauty and men of fashion waited anxiously to receive their invitations. Looking back on those many and dreary evenings, I am convinced that dancing to jazz is a far more enjoyable recreation. Excellent programmes were very often entirely spoilt by the chatter and commotion of a crowd of guests who had not the slightest interest in music or the art of singing.

Nothing is more depressing to an artist than such an evening as I remember at Devonshire House. Royalty was expected, and this caused a delay of half an hour before the music began. The Duchess of Devonshire finally requested a young harpist, who had been engaged as an act of charity, to open the

programme. Nobody listened to her. When she had finished, Busoni, the great pianist, sat down to play. The noise was so great that, except for the movement of his hands, one could not tell whether the piano was being played at all. Suddenly Busoni grew scarlet in the face, threw his arms up and fell across the piano, apparently in a faint. Rachel, Lady Dudley, herself a charming and sympathetic singer, was the first to go to his help. Brandy was hastily sent for. After a few minutes he regained consciousness and appeared to be none the worse for his swoon. The incident caused great excitement, but people stopped talking and, amid perfect silence, the great pianist played divinely, being rewarded with more enthusiasm than I had ever seen before at any fashionable assembly. At the end of the evening he whispered in my ear, "My dear, I am a good actor, am I not? It was a pretence—that faint—but if they had not stopped talking, I would not have recovered. Believe me, it is the best way to obtain silence in these unmusical crowds."

To cheer ourselves, he and I went to supper with Emma Calvé, one of the few great singers who had beauty, personal charm and a sense of humour. Dear Calvé! What a divine woman! She was always in love with someone and, needless to say, someone was always in love with her. We pictured Busoni's faked swoon at Devonshire House. She was most amused, and made us laugh by telling us one of her own experiences at a musical evening in London.

She had been engaged by a "nouveau riche" hostess to sing at a concert in Berkeley Square.

None of the guests appeared to know or notice the hostess, but they all knew each other—and that was enough. At ten o'clock the first star began her song. Only a few people listened, the majority keeping up a loud and incessant conversation. Calvé noticed all this, and at midnight approached her hostess and said smilingly, " I am going home. You have my name and that is all you want. You can put any amateur in my place and no one here will know the difference."

She told us this story with much relish, and I can imagine her hostess's feelings on finding that the " pièce de résistance " of the evening had left her house. Calvé was right, I think, for no amount of money can compensate an artist for singing or playing in the midst of conversation or confusion. On that occasion neither the lady who had engaged her nor the people who were invited to hear her really cared anything about art for art's sake. They were merely curious to see the famous singer because of her reputation, and the real pleasure would come later when they announced the fact to their friends.

Those were the days when individualism expressed itself more often in an unusual personality than in any product of a creative kind. The Edwardian period was, as we see it now, largely social, and it made no outstanding mark on the intellectual or artistic life of the country. Nor was it guilty of adding to the nation's lumber room as had the century that preceded it.

One of the most diverting characters of the time was Lady Charles Beresford, whose delightful house

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at Richmond became a centre for wags and celebrities. Her tea gowns, her painted eyebrows (which seldom matched), her brightly enamelled cheeks have now become historic. She dabbled in music, proclaimed herself a lover of Wagner and religiously attended the festivals at Bayreuth, where she amused her friends by telling them stories about everything except the operas—to which she hardly listened.

The week-end parties she gave at Richmond are piquant memories. I remember so well a group that surrounded her tea-table on the lawn one hot, sticky summer day. Lady Charles in a pink décolleté tea gown, a huge rope of blue turquoise twisted around her neck, her hair streaming in the breeze—beside her Sir Claude Phillips (afterwards Governor of the Wallace Collection) discussing art with George Moore—the charming Mrs. Hwfa Williams and the ever youthful Harry Melville babbling together in a new language which they claim to have invented, but which was most suggestive of the nursery (they call dinner "din-din," etc.) planning a dictionary for the use of their friends—Paul Plançon, the eminent French bass who was much annoyed when Lady Charles spoke of him as the "wonderful devil." These and others I remember. How we all laughed at the expression on Plançon's face when his hostess remarked, "You are such a handsome devil, that if I had been Marguerite I should have invited you to come into my cottage instead of that dreadfully fat tenor who sang Faust the other night."

During tea Lord Charlie arrived, looking very hot and decidedly cross. He was a thickly built straight-standing man with a ruddy skin. His manner was

most sympathetic and his speaking voice distinctly attractive. Without looking to right or left he went at once to his wife and said firmly, " If ever you land me with a cart-load of long-haired monstrosities again I will upset the whole damn lot into the gutter." She pretended to look quite surprised, and none of us understood the cause of his anger. Later Lord Marcus Beresford told me that his brother always drove down from London in a smart four-in-hand. He left town about half-past ten on Sunday morning and passed through the park at the time of church parade. His wife, unknown to him, had invited Johannes Wolff, the violinist, Hollman, the 'cellist, and a young harpist, whose name I have forgotten, to spend Sunday afternoon at Ham, and asked them to bring their instruments. The only means of transport that day was by coach, and her unsuspecting husband was forced to haul the musicians with their harp, 'cello, and violin cases on to the top of his smart equipage. His friends greeted him en route with cheers and questions: " Hello, Charlie! Gone into the entertainment business? Why not give us some music?" The coach must have looked like a circus wagon. And on a Sunday morning—in the Park!

When the musicians had stored their instruments in a safe place they joined our party on the lawn. Lady Charlie had a whispered consultation with Wolff, who shook his head disapprovingly several times. Eventually he nodded and we heard him say: " Oui, oui, Madame." Immediately our hostess issued orders. In a few minutes we saw a piano being dragged across the lawn by four strong

men and placed in a small marquee. After a little preliminary tuning the concert began.

It was a happy idea to have an open-air entertainment, but our hostess had forgotten to reckon with the instability of the English climate. Long before Wolff finished, a clap of thunder and the pattering of rain proved that the elements had no respect for music. The tent was not strong enough to resist the sharpness of the shower, and a deluge of water came through the canvas. At that moment Lord Charlie, arriving with a half dozen umbrellas, seemed highly delighted at the turn of events. "My revenge," he muttered in his wife's ear. "Who looks foolish now?"

That evening I realised that the young accompanist seemed very ill at ease. He had just come from Italy, and could not speak a word of English. The most gifted artists are often of very humble origin, and young Rossi, who had spent his entire life in Parma, had never before been inside a house of any importance. The thought of having to pass the night in what appeared to him to be a very great mansion filled him with confusion. So I accompanied him to his room and heard exclamations of surprise and indignation when he saw that his suit case had been unpacked and his things laid out on the bed.

"Dio mio!" he said angrily. "How dare anyone touch my clothes without asking my permission? How do I know some of my things have not been stolen?"

He was not convinced that his wardrobe had not been tampered with until he had scrutinized every-

thing most carefully. The last touch was his agitation at having forgotten to bring a towel!

The following morning I drove back to London with Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Phillips, afterwards Sir Lionel and Lady Phillips. They then lived at 33, Grosvenor Square and gave many musical parties.

It has been my strange destiny to spend at least half my life with very rich people, opera being one of those expensive luxuries that demand the support of millionaires. Thus, I imagine that I have known a record number of them. With the exception of one or two Americans, to whom I shall refer later on, I have never known any wealthy people whose generosity could compare with that of the Lionel Phillips'. Apart from their support of many public charities and institutions, they never failed to give kindly assistance to those who knocked at their door. Mrs. Phillips was a prodigy of spontaneous kindness, and I could name a dozen people whose lives she has brightened, and others who owe their success to her assistance. I may quote one act performed in her typically unostentatious way.

While she was a pupil of mine, and waiting one day for her lesson, she overheard a girl with a beautiful voice singing in my studio. She asked me later about the girl, and I explained that this was a young American anxious to study for opera, but who was forced to accept exhausting engagements in order to support her mother and family. These efforts, I added, would probably ruin her voice. Mrs. Phillips, a strangely attractive little woman, with the merriest eyes I have ever seen, always became shy and a

trifle self-conscious whenever she made an offer of help. She asked me a few more details, and at her request I arranged that she should meet the girl that day. The interview was short, but I saw that my protégée had made a very favourable impression. Then Mrs. Phillips whispered, " I will see what can be done." The next day a letter came from her enclosing a cheque for one thousand pounds. It was a very simple and characteristic letter, with not a word about repayment, nor any suggestion of the patronage that rich people often try to exercise over their protégées. She merely said that she hoped the money would enable the girl to realise her ambitions, and would relieve all financial worries in connection with herself and her family.

Lionel Phillips was, as I remember, a partner of Alfred Beit, the South African millionaire. During the famous Jameson raid, Phillips had a narrow escape from being shot and was under sentence of death for twenty-four hours.

His integrity was exceptional, and that he always met his obligations generously I know from my own experience. I was asked to arrange a musical evening at his house, and at his request secured the finest talent available. I cannot remember all the artists whom I engaged, but do know that Caruso, Busoni, Melba and Plançon were among the singers, and the French actress, Réjane, came over from Paris especially to recite. A huge marquee had been erected for supper, tables being laid for two hundred guests. As I was walking leisurely towards the house that evening, I found, to my surprise, a cordon of police barring the way at South Audley Street.

With difficulty I obtained permission to pass the barrier, only to find 33 Grosvenor Square in flames. A battery of fire engines were pouring water on that part of the house next the marquee, and the flames from the burning canvas gave the impression that the entire structure would be destroyed. As one by one the artists and guests arrived, the scene was extraordinary. Tosti, whose sense of humour never abandoned him even in a dangerous moment, begged the firemen to haul the grand piano into the square. This, of course, they refused to do. But he was not to be discouraged. It was a warm July evening, and he suggested that Caruso serenade the occupants of Grosvenor Square. The famous tenor, who was one of the best of good fellows, would have consented, but the noise and confusion of the fire engines was too great to permit of a single note being heard, so Tosti's open air concert had to be abandoned, and the guests of the evening departed without supper or music. The fire did not injure the house as much as was expected, but the marquee was destroyed.

It is an unwritten law that no artist can claim payment of fees when a fire destroys an opera house or concert hall in which the performance was to have taken place. Consequently, Lionel Phillips could have availed himself of this rule, had he wished to do so; but although cachets ran as high as five hundred guineas each, he paid them all in full. I remember Melba telling me afterwards that she had bought herself a brooch with the cheque Phillips sent her.

A house party given by Ernest Beckett, afterwards Lord Grimthorpe, at Woodlee, was another

Edwardian affair that is still a vivid memory. The house was charming and in excellent taste, but extremely cold, as our host kept all the doors and windows open, arguing it was good for his health. The guests that week-end were Lady Algy Gordon-Lennox, Mrs. Ronnie Greville, Mrs. Jack Leslie, Mrs. Murray Guthrie, Miss Eve Fairfax, Mrs. George Keppel, Winston Churchill, Harry Cust, Frank Harris, Chauncey Depew, Rodin, Sargent and Claude Phillips.

Churchill seemed an aggressive young man with a passion for argument, and after dinner I listened to a political discussion between himself, our host and his particular friend, Harry Cust, in which he asserted that the law of compromise would have to be observed. Beckett and Cust immediately denied the existence of " the law of compromise," maintaining that compromise was in itself the breaking of a law. I agreed with Cust, and this particularly irritated Churchill, who turned to me and said : " You had better keep your fingers for piano playing instead of putting them into other people's pies !"

Rodin, with the head of a lion and the eyes of a child, was to me the most sympathetic member of the party. He seemed utterly out of place in such a gathering, and would have been far happier in more primitive surroundings. His shyness was quite pathetic and he hid himself in a corner during the evening to sketch Muriel Beckett, our host's youngest daughter.

Sargent, on the other hand, who was really an extremely shy man, gave one the impression of having a great deal of self-assurance. He was quite

ENRICO CARUSO AND HENRY RUSSELL

a good musician and often accompanied Mrs. George Batten when she sang. Mrs. Ronnie Greville attracted a great deal of attention. She was very witty, and at the same time kind—a quality which is rare in people famous for their epigrams. Our host was devoted to music, and kept Sargent, Mrs. Jack Leslie (who was an amateur of exceptional talent) and myself at the piano until the early hours of the morning.

King Edward in those days was a friend and frequent guest of Consuelo Duchess of Manchester, whose sense of humour pleased and amused him. She was extraordinarily handsome, in many ways quite unconventional, and delighted in surrounding herself with vivacious and sparkling people. She and her sister, Miss Emily Yznaga, were frankly and agreeably American, and neither of them ever abandoned their transatlantic accent for the aristocratic drawl assumed by many of their fellow country-women. The Duchess was quite a good musician and sang negro melodies delightfully.

Her brother-in-law, Sir John Lister-Kaye, had crossed from New York on the same boat as little Alice Nielsen, a celebrated comic opera singer. When he arrived in London he asked me to try her voice and see whether she was not capable of doing better things. At that time it seemed to me that with study she might develop into an interesting artist, and I arranged for her to sing to the Duchess of Manchester. Alice was in good form, and I saw at once that she made a good impression, and the Duchess asked her there and then whether she would like to sing before King Edward. I can still remem-

ber the expression of surprise and amazement which came into Alice's face. Although she had enjoyed unparalleled success in comic opera, she was really quite unspoilt. She assumed none of the airs and graces which distinguish certain successful stars, and the prospect of singing for a king seemed to appeal to her much as a fairy story appeals to a child. The Duchess, who was always kind to young artists, took her by the hand and told her not to be shy or nervous.

"But," said little Nielsen, obviously trembling in her shoes, "I shall have to curtsey, walk backwards and do all sorts of funny things!"

"Don't worry," said the Duchess, "I will give you some lessons myself, and by the time the night arrives you will not be the least bit afraid."

Alice, however, was not so easily comforted, and sometimes in the middle of a lesson with me she would suddenly stop and say, "I wish I had not to bring off that King stunt in a few days." I assured her that our King had none of the pomposity or arrogance which she disliked in steel kings, sugar kings, sausage kings and all the other commercial kings of her acquaintance.

At last the evening arrived. The concert was preceded by a dinner party. The guests included Lord and Lady de Grey (afterwards Lady Ripon), the Marquis de Soveral, Lady Randolph Churchill, Mrs. George Keppel and others belonging to what was known in London as the King's set.

After dinner the King, who was seated between Mrs. George Keppel and Lady Randolph Churchill, asked Nielsen to sing "Good-bye." Lady Ran-

dolph during the second verse began to talk, and the King answered her in his deep voice. Alice grew very nervous. It so happens that the third verse of "Good-bye" begins with the words, "Hush! the leaves are falling," and she aimed the word "hush!" so pointedly at the King that he was startled in the midst of his conversation and immediately relapsed into complete silence. As soon as the song was finished he got up and walking towards Alice said, good-naturedly, "Miss Nielsen, I really deserved that 'hush!' from you and I hope you will forgive me for talking."

In strange contrast to the informality of the gatherings at which one often met King Edward, then Prince of Wales, was the rigid observance of court etiquette that accompanied every appearance of the Kaiser. I remember a house party at Furstenstein given by Prince Henry of Pless, who had recently married Daisy Cornwallis-West. Both Princess Pless and her sister Shelagh were pupils of mine. The castle, massive and forbidding without, was equally formal and freezingly cold within. During the war the Kaiser used it as his headquarters in Prussia, and eminently suitable it must have been for the purpose. Even the terraced gardens were austere, and the attempts Princess Pless had made to modify the formality by introducing English comforts were lost in the atmosphere of Prussian militarism.

The castle was so vast that the first evening of my arrival I lost my way trying to find a staircase. As I wandered through corridor after corridor my alarm increased, realising that to be late for dinner

was an unforgivable crime. Finally, not meeting a single soul, I vigorously pressed a bell in the wall, hoping that a servant would appear, and had scarcely taken my hand away when my ears were deafened by the clanging of many bells and the excited shrieks of voices. In a moment I was surrounded by the entire house party as well as the servants, including the chef with saucepan in hand. It was a nightmare of the worst kind, and my discomfort was complete when I was told that it was the fire alarm I had rung. However, the relief was so great that everybody roared with laughter, and amid the tumult I was introduced to the guests, who included the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, Countess Torby, the Count of Turin, Lord Belgrave and Mr., Mrs. and Miss Cornwallis-West.

Forty of us sat down to dinner, and there must have been half as many nationalities among the guests. Mrs. Cornwallis-West was a beautiful and amusing woman, and her witty conversation dominated the dinner table. She also took a great interest in good food and was very proud of a sweet she had just invented, which was vanilla ice cream with hot chocolate sauce.

Punctually at nine o'clock every morning the house party gathered for breakfast, when orders for the day were read out. Only royalties were consulted or asked their pleasure. As our host was a reigning prince, he insisted on the strictest ceremony being observed. When we drove out every carriage had two footmen perched behind, was drawn by four horses and preceded by outriders. Bugles were blown to announce our exit from the castle gates,

and cannons fired to greet the arrival or departure of a royal guest. I remember hearing Cornwallis-West, who was, above all, a simple country gentleman and loathed regulations and formalities, say to his son-in-law : " For God's sake find me a donkey cart and let me drive it myself."

One afternoon the Kaiser accompanied by his suite paid a state call. When the fatal hour approached cannons boomed, flags were unfurled and gold encrusted uniforms glinted in the sunlight, while the guests who were drawn up in line in one of the huge salons inwardly quaked. A clatter of hoofs in the courtyard—a breathless moment—then the entrance of the Emperor! Cornwallis-West tried to hide himself behind a massive piece of furniture, but his towering figure betrayed him and, much to his discomfort, he was summoned to the Imperial presence.

One by one the guests made their obeisance. It was a magnificently staged incident, but infinitely tiring for the actors; and I remember with what sighs of relief we relaxed when the last equerries had ridden away. The next day the party broke up.

I had been asked by my hostess to look after Mrs. Lawrence Townsend and her niece, who were travelling to Paris on the same train as myself. The ladies were tired and I arranged with the conductor that they should not be disturbed. However, past midnight I heard an official knocking at the ladies' door, so rushed into the corridor and remonstrated with him. He let forth a totally unintelligible volley of abuse, which I answered in the few words of German I knew. The effect was amazing. The

man glared at me and went away. About half an hour later I was awakened by the conductor and two ferocious military police, who, I could see, had every intention of throwing me off the train. It appeared that by insulting the ticket collector I had insulted the German army. They asked for my card, and, half asleep, I handed them the first I found in my pocket. To my astonishment they clicked heels, bowed, asked me my pleasure and obsequiously withdrew. In the morning I discovered that I had handed them Prince Hohenlohe's card instead of my own.

CHAPTER II

PRIME DONNE

PRIME donne have for many years furnished, so to speak, the human grist for my musical mill. Thus, as was inevitable, I saw what may be called her reverse side—often a very different being from the sparkling creature who later dominated the realm bordered by footlights. I have wrestled with her on wintry mornings, travelled with her in third-rate trains, and hour after hour condemned and encouraged, criticised and sometimes cursed her. It is she with her temperament, her whims and notably her figure, who has whitened my hair! Oh! that figure! The gods have ordained that a great voice must inhabit, almost invariably, an ample form. A large mouth, a full throat and a broad, deep chest—these are the important factors in the production of sound, and without them one rarely finds a voice of power or resonance.

Singers are undoubtedly inclined to over-eat and under-exercise, but these defects are only partly responsible for the type of figure that reminds one more of a public building than an operatic heroine! I speak now of the old-fashioned prima donna, who has almost ceased to exist. Her throat, as a rule, was more developed than her brain and, with a few notable exceptions, she took no interest in anything or anybody but herself. Not that a healthy

egoism is to be condemned—far from it! Most people prefer it to that colourless altruism which the weak so often mistake for virtue. But my objection to the egotism of the prima donna was not because she wanted to live her life in her own way and entirely for her own sake, but because she wanted everybody else to live exactly as she pleased and entirely for her sake. Whatever she said was right and whoever disagreed with her was wrong. She was void of a sense of justice. If she quarrelled with a friend or impresario (as she often did and does now) she wished you to quarrel with him also. If she took a strong aversion to a young singer (and she often did) she expected you also to share the aversion.

I remember dining with a typical specimen of the old school. She was fair, fat and double-forte, and her mood that evening was thunderous and thrifty. Mr. Umberto, Ciro's capable and urbane master of ceremonies, did his best to steer the lady into a pleasant humour.

The champagne began to do its work. As the lady's thirst decreased, her thrift increased. Her guests were all people who were more or less afraid of her.

"No more wine to-night, my children," she said with parental authority. "I will order you some wonderful mineral water they have here. You must make your friends buy it, as I have some shares in the company."

This conversation would have gone on indefinitely had not John Maccormack, the jovial Irish tenor, at that moment entered the restaurant. We ex-

changed friendly salutations. My hostess turned every colour of the rainbow.

"Henry!" she almost yelled, to the amazement of the neighbouring diners, "how dare you smile at that pig of a tenor when you are at my table?"

I answered quite calmly that he was a friend of mine.

"How can he be a friend of yours," she said, puffing with rage, "when he is an enemy of mine?"

I ventured to remark that while I agreed that "les amis de nos amis sont nos amis," I saw no reason why the reverse should be accepted. This is an example of a great artist afflicted with an unfortunate temperament.

It has been said that jealousy is the root of all evil; I should prefer to say that jealousy was the root from which the old type of prima donna sprang. I have in mind one who was a typical example. Jealousy was her thermometer; when she sang her worst, her temperature was at its highest; when she sang her best, her temperature was nearly normal—unless, of course, the tenor got more applause than she did—then up went her thermometer with a bound. "I'll never sing again with that dirty 'dago,'" she would cry, "he spends half his salary in buying up the gallery and having himself applauded." It was in vain that the director of the opera house assured her that the "dago" was the best of good fellows, incapable of an ungenerous action. "Oh yes," she replied bitterly, "I suppose he lets you pocket half his salary. Well, you won't get mine! You and your entire staff are in league against me. You have even bought the critics. Well, thank God! *I* wasn't born near Vesuvius!

You should keep those Neapolitan spaghetti-eating emigrants at home. Even your office boy helped Musette into her taxi before he called *my* car! And as to your conductor, you could scarcely hear the orchestra when Musette sang her waltz, and he actually stopped them playing to wait for her applause! When I sing he plays so loudly that people say I'm losing my voice; and your baritone bellows like a bull and treats me like a cow. But for my name you wouldn't get a cat in your theatre. So you can just count me out and give my rôle to that young American idiot you over-advertised last week. Thank God! I'm a lady and an honest woman —lovers don't pay for my debut or my dresses."

Fortunately for the public and for the interests of operatic art, this type of individual has all but disappeared. The very term "prima donna," which literally translated means " first woman," only came into existence through old-fashioned operas like " Lucia," " Barbiere," etc., where the whole interest of the performance centres on the heroine. Twenty years ago the public cared little whether the interpreter of " Lucia " was thin or fat, graceful or ungraceful, an actress or a stick, intelligent or stupid; they only asked that she should sing gloriously and be capable of astonishing them with spectacular high notes and trills.

It was in England and America that the " star " system developed, and the Metropolitan of New York was at one time its chief hot-bed. The petty quarrels, the jealousies and the intrigues were unlimited. Singers like Eames, Sembrich, Calvé, Nordica, Melba and Geraldine Farrar were allowed to

dominate any opera in which they appeared. Scenery was modified to suit their taste, lights arranged to suit their complexions, tenors chosen to suit their affections and conductors thrown out to gratify their tempers.

I have no individual criticism to make against any of these singers. Nordica was one of my best friends and an adorable woman on and off the stage; but she had been brought up in an old school that allowed the prima donna to dominate; and if anything happened to displease her, whether it was for or against the interest of the opera, she would have her way. The same applied to Madame Eames that most distinguished and cultivated New England artist. Geraldine Farrar, who never should have been classed with the great singers of the world, was pampered and spoilt under the Conried régime.

The star system at the Metropolitan received its death blow with the arrival of Toscanini, that astonishing genius who is not only one of the greatest conductors of the age, but also one of the most vitalizing personalities that the operatic world has ever known. An indefatigable worker, and although a severe taskmaster with others, even more severe with himself. I have known him go without food or sleep in order to perfect the ensemble of an operatic performance. When he arrived in New York his first most difficult task was the disciplining of the prime donne. This he accomplished either by subjecting them to his will, or eliminating them altogether. I remember one incident when his ruthless sarcasm had the desired effect.

A rehearsal of "La Tosca" was in full swing.

Geraldine Farrar was not singing in strict accordance with Puccini's directions. Toscanini at once called attention to her divergency. She was intensely annoyed at the rebuke and, losing her temper, called out: "Maestro, please remember I am a star!"

"The place for stars is in heaven, Mademoiselle," answered Toscanini, at the top of his voice.

The rehearsal proceeded without any further rebellion.

If opera is to survive at all, and if it is to be taken seriously as a form of art, the domination of the prima donna must cease. As soon as she attempts to interfere with any part of the performance that does not strictly concern her own work, she becomes a menace, and by undermining discipline destroys the whole force of a production.

Operas on the Continent were never used merely for the setting of one brilliant singer, but were, and are, composite productions in which each particle is placed in its correct relation to the whole. Audiences are not beguiled when they know that a Caruso or Melba is singing, but are rather sensitively quickened by the fact, and the greater the name the sterner the criticism.

However, the days of operatic constellations are on the wane; a leavening process is at work in the world of music. The last time Caruso sang in Italy I went to see him in his dressing-room. He was shaking with fear. I asked him why.

"The English and American peoples are kind and tolerant; they are loyal to a name and a favourite, but the Italians are merciless. Because I am Caruso higher prices are charged for the seats when

I sing, they expect me therefore to be perfect; they exact value for their money. Every time I sing in Italy it is a new debut—it may be a triumph, or it may be a failure."

He was right; and I regret to say that he was a partial failure. His voice was no longer the fresh, pure lyric tenor of his early days. Both the public and the newspapers did not hesitate to say so. Caruso was naturally hurt by this brutal frankness. His triumphs in America had made him careless. He was beloved by the audiences of the Metropolitan, and whether his art improved or deteriorated it mattered little to them and, consequently, little to him. As long as it was "a Caruso night" all was well; but fifty per cent. of his success in America was snobbism, and he knew it.

One night for a joke he sang the Arlecchino in "Pagliacci." It is a small rôle, but it contains a fine and passionate melody that is sung off the stage. And though he sang superbly, only a few experts recognised the divine voice.

The modern lyric drama has given us a very different type of singer from the star of thirty years ago. It would be absurd to call Bellincioni or Mary Garden prime donne. They are artists who sing, and not machines for the production of high notes. In comparing them with ordinary human beings, one finds them without exception spoilt; but, then, all charming people should be spoilt. It is the price one gladly pays for their charm. I remember La Bellincioni in most of her principal rôles. She was perhaps a greater actress than a singer. But above all, she was an artist, and desired that those who

shared in her performance should equal herself and enjoy as much success. The same can be said of Mary Garden, who has always insisted on having the co-operation of the best artists. Even in the rôle of Thaïs, when she dresses, undresses and digresses divinely, and where the entire interest of the opera centres on her, she never for a moment transgresses the laws of good taste or the limitations of artistic interpretation.

My acquaintance with Melba, the Australian prima donna, began in a rather curious way. In her memoirs she tells how she met my brother, Sir Landon Ronald, and pays a charming tribute to his gifts as a musician. I can remember how delighted he was when the great singer first invited him to be her accompanist. I felt almost jealous of Landon, as I had never been introduced to her and at that time was an enthusiastic student of the voice. It was at the end of the London opera season, in 1895, and Melba was leaving for Paris when Landon told me he was going to see her off at Charing Cross and begged me to accompany him. We were finally introduced, and, in spite of the confusion on the station platform that made conversation difficult, Melba talked to me long enough to become interested in my work as a teacher.

"I am sorry I did not meet you before. I should like to know more about your method," she said as the train was about to leave. "Come to Paris and dine with me at my apartment in the Rue de Prony."

I accepted her invitation, although it involved an important change of my plans, as I had already taken a ticket to Germany. Two days later I kept

my appointment and enjoyed an agreeable evening with her. She grew quite excited when I explained my method of teaching, and insisted on my returning the next day, when we tried several vocal experiments together. The seeds were sown of what might have proved a friendship of mutual utility. I was pleased that she was interested in my work, and glad that she could make use of my knowledge of the human throat. A correspondence ensued between us, and she expressed in the most enthusiastic terms her belief in my work. The following autumn she sent me numerous pupils. Among them was a charming American, a Mrs. Karst, who afterwards succeeded admirably in the United States.

Haddon Chambers, the playwright, was another Australian then coming into prominence. I had known him in his boyhood when he lived in rooms in a small house near St. John's Wood. He had great personal charm, was generous to a fault and had a most diverting sense of humour that endeared him to all his friends.

One afternoon he came to read me one of his plays and asked me whether I thought it would make a good subject for an opera. I forget now what my opinion was, but I remember that we discussed the singers of the day. He was a great admirer of Melba, who had just conquered London, but had never met her. He had noticed with regret her lack of dramatic power.

" What a pity," he remarked, " that she is so cold. Her voice is the most divine thing in the world, and if someone would only teach her to act, she would be perfect."

I had asked her to supper and begged him to stay and meet her. He accepted with joy, and it proved a most amusing evening. The other guests were Lady Charles Beresford, Robin Grey, Tosti and George Moore.

Few people knew more about the stage at that time than Haddon, and Melba realised at once how much she could learn from her talented compatriot. The friendship grew and the diva undoubtedly benefited by the care that Haddon bestowed on every new rôle she learnt, teaching her gradually to be an intelligent actress. I forget how long their friendship actually lasted, but I remember Melba telling me how grateful she was for his assistance and how she considered her art had improved by her association with him. For reasons, however, that I never understood and which he never explained, he suddenly ceased to be *persona grata* to her. I can only suppose that he shared my own experience and found her a trifle too exigent from time to time.

During the following years I saw a great deal of Melba. One summer I took a villa near Stresa, on the Lago Maggiore. The prospect of a few weeks' rest by the beautiful lake appealed to the weary prima donna so much that she asked me whether she might bring some friends and join my house party. I still have several of her letters in which she mentions the names of the people she wished me to invite. In those days, being the acclaimed queen of song, we treated her as royalty and made every reasonable concession to her foibles.

One hot July day I received a telegram to say that she and her friends were arriving at Locarno

and asking me to meet them. I hired a launch and steamed up to that picturesque, and now historic little town, but found no trace of Melba or her party. She had got off at the wrong station and arrived at my villa before my return. We were quite a large party—Bernie Rolt, Robin Grey, his sister Dolly, Lady Stracey (the attractive sister of Lady Wavertree) and Theodore Byard. Theo, who was an intimate friend of mine, was devoted to Melba, and to please her brought his gondola all the way from Venice. I still have an amusing snapshot of him and Melba in the gondola on the lake.

The days were filled with excursions, parties, and above all, music. There were critics as well as artists among the guests, as Robin Grey edited at that time a paper called " The Musician." Melba rose early every morning and practised conscientiously in the garden. One day a nurse from a neighbouring villa, fuming with rage, precipitated herself on to the terrace and shaking her fist at the startled singer, shouted : " You have awakened my baby with that dreadful noise, and if you don't stop I'll have you prosecuted."

Another evening when the sky was lit by an August moon, and the mountains stood like black ramparts between us and reality, Melba sang. The golden voice was borne across the silence of land and water until it reached the little town of Pallanza, five kilometres away. The following day we heard that crowds had gathered there on the piazza enchanted by the notes so distant and yet so clear.

At the end of my house party, Melba, accompanied by Lady Stracey and Bernie Rolt, left for

Venice, where they were joined by Haddon Chambers. Venice in those days was still more or less a dream city where tourists walked with humble, reverent feet, gondoliers disguised their avarice, and serenades were spontaneous outbursts, not tawdry affairs arranged to thrill the romantic. There was scarcely an hour during the day or night when music did not wake the echoes, and the little party from Stresa must have added bountifully to the song that filled the air.

When the autumn mists rose from the lake and the acid smell of the vintage permeated even the cobble stones, I closed the villa and went southwards. Rome and Florence were still shuttered and uninviting, so by slow stages I journeyed to Naples and finally arrived at Ravello. Ernest Grimthorpe was then padrone of the villa Cimbrone and allowed it to be used by his friends when and how they liked, and one was always sure of finding there congenial spirits and bountiful hospitality.

The society of my host gave me the keenest pleasure and we spent several happy weeks together. He insisted on being guide, and made me accompany him for mountain walks that nearly shattered my nervous system; but when evening came he would sit motionless for hours by the piano while I played. We both shared a love for Ravello, that curiously beautiful village lying on a hill-top a mile above the sea, as though it had been placed there purposely out of reach of the careless traveller. The roads, villas and walls, dazzlingly white in the sunlight, are perfectly preserved, and nothing occurs, or is likely to occur, to disturb them. A strange stillness envelopes the straggling streets

and dogs are said not to bark there, or cocks to crow. In both of the dusky churches are marble pulpits, exquisitely carved and as graceful in form as chalices of alabaster. In the gardens, terraced and buttressed by thick walls, an unending cycle of loveliness appears almost unaided by human hands, as though beneath the rocks lay some unlimited store of beauty.

As we watched the sun dip below the ragged ridges of the horizon, and dusk creep across the sea until even the barren peaks were shrouded, our dreams took the form of ideas, and ideas became convictions. Before the moon rose, new movements were being discussed, and the artistic fate of Europe decided upon. Everything seemed possible, viewed from the flower-hung terrace, but, alas, it is always the fairest dreams that fade most quickly. Later, when we returned to England, these same hopes and theories one by one died lingering deaths, killed by the fog and gloom of reality.

I saw nothing of Melba for some time after her visit to Stresa, though we parted the best of friends. She went to America, and when I met her again in London, much to my surprise, she received me with obvious coldness. I had had no experience of prime donne in those days, and was puzzled at the sudden change of her attitude, still having the illusion that they behaved like normal people. Robin Grey, Byard and Haddon Chambers, each gave a different reason for the change, but none was satisfactory, and I dismissed the subject from my mind, and for over ten years we passed each other as strangers. In another chapter I will tell the history of the recon-

ciliation that took place in Boston, with the result that Melba sang several times under my direction. I saw a great deal of her after her return from America and, in fact, once again she became my guest.

This time the scene was not the Lago Maggiore, but a little farm I own, tucked away in the hills over Monte Carlo. One August day she arrived with her maid and installed herself quite happily in my modest dwelling. We had many amusing experiences together, for when Melba is in good form she is a most entertaining companion.

She often returned to the Riviera, and we might still be friends, had I not made the fatal mistake of accepting the artistic direction of her opera season in Australia. Before agreeing to her proposals I should have remembered Schopenhauer's warning: "To become reconciled with a person with whom you have once quarrelled is a form of weakness, and you pay the penalty of it when she takes the first opportunity of doing precisely the very thing which brought about the breach."

CHAPTER III

FIRST VISIT TO ITALY

HOW frequently do the most self-contained of mortals surrender to the strange influence of the inanimate. Pictures, ancient buildings, vistas of nature, historic cities that seem still tenanted by the departed—all these express a voiceless message that is at all times irresistible. For myself, I was yet in my teens when the thought of Italy and a growing hunger for what she alone can transmit laid hold of me, and since then I have been a worshipper of her beauty and slave to her whims. Though I fully realise that her effect on the alien artist is that of a dangerous narcotic—stimulating in small draughts, but when taken as food or drink inducing such a state of torpor that ambitions fade, vitality oozes away, and such things as time and purpose cease to exist; I hold, nevertheless, that it is for the gods to decide whether the "*dolce far niente*" condition is to be envied or despised. Since my earliest recollections Italy meant the climax of everything, but the reasons why and how I never attempted to analyse. Work was imperative, for work meant money, and with money one could buy railway tickets. I talked about Italy, read about it, but most of all dreamt about it.

Luigi Mancinelli was then principal conductor

of the opera in London, and when I was about nineteen we became great friends. He took a personal delight in my visions of his country, and finally, after many months of discussion and planning, stage-managed their fulfilment in a most artistic way.

After much labour I saved a sum sufficient for the journey and waited impatiently until the end of the opera season, when my courier would be free. At last the time came and the route was planned so that my first impressions should be of the finest. The Simplon Pass was chosen as the most spectacular entrance and, as the great tunnel had not yet been cut, we were not deprived of the thrill of first having to scale the barricades of, what was to me, Paradise. We drove from Brigue to Pallanza in a diligence, every moment being so full of superb sensations that I have since pitied those who rush underground, entombed in the train de luxe, unconscious of the splendour above them. Our lungs filled with Alpine air, we gradually descended from snow-capped mountains to rock-cradled lakes and warm valleys, on whose fertile slopes rich vineyards nestle, until we reached the brown and opulent plains about Milan. It was mid-summer, and a blanket of hot air seemed to press close to the earth.

Mancinelli's villa was built by the sea, where a small bay cut its way into the coast between Genoa and Rapallo. It was crude without, but cool and spacious within, only furnished with bare necessities that were all of a forgivable ugliness. But the villa might have been a cave as far as I was concerned, as a few hours after our arrival I discovered the sea of seas. My last swim had been in the Eng-

lish Channel the August before, in water so frigid that after the few minutes I endured out of mere bravado, I had to run half a mile to get warm. The fact that my companions found the agony heartily amusing did not justify the suffering to my mind, and I decided to bear their contempt and give up the sport for ever. But the joy of that first plunge into the limpid warmth of the Mediterranean changed something inside me, and it was then, I think, that I surrendered myself to Italy.

The sunny beach of the Lido had not then been transformed into an exotic playground for the rich, and the idea that Italian summers could be perfect was laughed at—only madmen went to Italy during the heat. After that first bathe I became one of the happy company of fools. During those months when my mind was serenely inactive I made one firm resolution—to return to the shores of the Ligurian Sea every summer, whatever were the sacrifices incurred.

Behind Mancinelli's villa, on the gracious hill-tops that looked towards the sea, were ancient castles, whose terraced slopes bore olive groves and vineyards, between them winding white roads flanked by stiff black cyprus, that grew grey when the ponderous oxen stirred the dust—labouring stolidly, were their burdens light or heavy. Earth-coloured walls crumbled behind screens of roses and wisteria, and in corners that held a little soil oleanders and camelias pushed out frail wooden limbs bearing waxy blossoms of red and white. These nameless ruins, seemed forgotten except by nature, who, it appeared, was trying to absorb once more her pillaged self and

hide this slow destruction with a pall of flowering things. I explored the hills and the coast to where the rose and yellow crags of the Carraras stand with their marble backs against the plains of Tuscany. Somewhere beyond in the saucer they protected lay Florence and Pisa. It was not of them I thought, but of Rome—the Mecca of my pilgrimage. Even tourists in those days avoided the cities during the great heat; and at the announcement that I had planned to journey there, my host let forth a volume of sound that I gathered meant he considered me completely mad. However, with my remaining lire I bought a ticket and left him sorrowfully pondering upon the obscure ways of the English.

The shimmering glaze of heat that hung over city and Campagna had driven even the hardy Romans to the hills and sea, and the streets were deserted. So during that first visit I explored the skeleton of Rome and wandered undisturbed by chattering crowds of tourists or the chants of villainous-looking guides. Even the avaricious brethren had ceased their wails, and I was left completely alone. When the Tiber ran with blood from the setting sun, or the moon rose from behind the black images of trees, or the cricket sang in the long grass of the Forum, I watched and listened—an enchanted spectator. During later visits I discovered the Romans—people of charm, happy procrastination, proud diffidence, democrats of the democrats.

It was after such a summer spent in Italy that I returned to London late in the autumn. A damp yellow fog filled the air and it seemed as though a

gigantic bowl had been dropped over the city, excluding light and air. Memories of stinging heat and sharp sunshine mingled in my mind. I wondered how in such a climate as this one could teach people to sing. To choke was all one could do! During the winter I knew that over one hundred lessons a week were to be given, besides an eternal round of engagements. Italy—Rome—Naples, the words rang in my head. The fog lingered. Within two weeks I had cancelled my lessons, disposed of my house in Curzon Street and announced to my friends that hereafter they would find me in Rome. "Insane," they murmured. "The sun in Italy during the summer—so terribly strong, you know—often affects people like this."

Tosti, however, I felt would sympathise with me, so I hastened to the little flat in Mandeville Place, the scene for years of many delightful gatherings. For some time we had worked together, often teaching each other's pupils, and the thought of breaking up the association with him and his delightful wife, Bertha, filled me with regret. He greeted me at the door of his studio with a cheery smile that faded when he saw my tense expression.

Tosti. You look very serious, my dear Enrico. Have you lost any money?

Myself. No. But I probably shall lose a lot. I have fallen in love!

Tosti. At your age that is a common occurrence. You will soon recover. Is she married or single?

Myself. Neither. I have not fallen in love with a

woman—I have fallen in love with Italy, and I am going to leave London and live in Rome!

Tosti. You are mad, my dear.

Myself. I agree. But I can't help it.

Tosti. How much do you earn in London with your teaching?

Myself. One hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds per week.

Tosti. You won't earn as many pennies in Rome!

Myself. I know I shall not. I don't expect to. I shall be quite satisfied if I can pay my expenses.

Tosti. You won't even do that. Remember that Italians sing naturally. They don't believe in "voice production" and even if they did, they would not pay for it.

Myself. I fear you are right. But nothing will change my decision. I am going to risk "le tout pour le tout."

Tosti. (Looking at me with an expression of pity and amusement and putting his hands on my shoulders). Amico, tu fai una dolce follia. (You are committing a delightful vagary).

Even after an hour I could not convince him that I was doing anything but an act of madness, and, although a Neapolitan, he did not understand the passion Italy had aroused in me. He described the unsurmountable difficulties I would find, and prophesied that never again should I make such an income as I had enjoyed in London. In this

he was right, for not even during the years when I was head of the Boston Opera House did I earn as much as I had as a teacher of singing in England. But, wisely or unwisely, youth does not always appreciate the value of money, and I felt at the time that nothing money could buy would ever give me the happiness I would find in Rome. My instinct proved right, and I have never regretted the decision.

I returned to Rome in time to enjoy the " Estate di San Martino," the few weeks that follow the heavy autumn rains, when the sun at midday is hot, the grass becomes green again and frail wild flowers appear in the fields. It is as though nature wished to make a brief apology for the bitter weather that must follow. I was fortunate to find an apartment in the Palazzo Roccagiovine near the famous Foro Traiano, where I settled down at once and began the search for pupils. Tosti's words often echoed in my ears, for I did not earn any money. The majority of my pupils were not only unable to pay for their lessons, but very often asked me for financial assistance. I think most teachers find that pupils who can sing can seldom pay, and those who can pay, but seldom sing. In spite of poverty, however, the life was most delightful.

The Roman aristocracy produces a type of woman whose rival cannot be found the world over. Such as the Duchessa Nicoletta, or Donna Franca Florio, or Princessa Trabia are not to be found outside Italy. Theirs is a beauty and charm allied with vivacity and intellectual brilliance. It was about such hostesses that Roman society in those days

revolved. The beauty of Italian women is found in all classes. Lina Cavalieri was a daughter of the people.

There were, and are still, in Italy men, who, princes in name, are also princes in the world of art. Il Conte di San Martino, President of the famous Conservatory of Santa Cecilia was one. He took an active part in the musical life of Rome, and proved at all times the friend of struggling musicians. It was he who introduced me to Baron and Baroness Blanc, owners of an exquisite villa outside Porta Pia, which was then still the country. I remember a gay luncheon party they gave for Adelina Patti.

She was the same attractive, vivacious person as of old, and bitterly complained that age was robbing her of her most precious possession—her high notes. She demanded an explanation. I launched forth a string of technicalities for this phenomenon, but she laughingly interrupted :

" Oh, those long words make my head ache ! Just tell me how I can recover one of my head notes, and I will bless you forever."

But as only a miracle would have resurrected them we talked of other things. She referred to London and the English in terms of enthusiastic affection, announcing that there was no public in the world as loyal to a favourite singer as the English. A few weeks later she discovered, to her cost, that the Italian public was not so kind. She had not been heard in Italy for many years, and suddenly decided to give a concert in Rome. Unfortunately, among the songs she chose was " Il Bacio." Its first line begins, " Give me a kiss on the lips." Patti, who

was nearly seventy and really looked older, dressed and behaved like a much younger woman. Her voice was still marvellous in the medium, but shrill and unpleasant in high notes, and when she repeated smilingly to the public, " Give me a kiss on the lips," there came from the gallery shouts of "Too late, my dear, too late!" For a moment she seemed stunned! then recovering herself, finished the song. She came off the platform trembling with rage and threatened not to sing again, but, after persuasion, decided to continue. Then a curious thing happened. She sang the famous " Voi che Sapete " as only she could sing it. It calls for no high notes, no fireworks—just the art of *bel canto*. The entire audience rose to their feet and cheered the great artist until she completely forgot the hostile manifestations which had received her at first. This instance is very typical of a Latin public. It is quick to condemn, but equally quick to approve.

After the performance I found the diva with Don Prospero Cellini, the most able art critic in Italy, whose knowledge of singing was greater than that of any man of his time. He wrote criticisms of musical events of any importance, but never signed his name or disclosed his identity. He had a horror of notoriety, and was so shy that he avoided making new friends and literally ran from strangers. I was surprised to find him in Rome, as he usually spent all his time in his picturesque villa in Capri. When we said good-bye to Patti we sauntered towards the Piazza della Libertă. I could not help referring to the lack of good manners shown by the Roman public when Patti sang her first song.

Don Prospero. Yes, I can understand your English sense of propriety being shocked. But although I don't always approve of Italian manners, their brutal sincerity has the advantage of enabling a singer to know at once whether he is a success or a failure.

Myself. But surely a singer of Patti's reputation deserves more respect and more loyalty ?

Don Prospero. In this country there is no respect or loyalty for a singer's past accomplishments. The greater her reputation, the greater the exigence of the public. Patti is famous and rich ; she should retire on her laurels. Patti was one of the greatest singers of her age, now she must make way for the young ones. Basta ! (with a curious significant gesture) the stage is not a hospital for the vocally senile !

Myself. Do you really think Patti had a greater voice than Melba ?

Don Prospero. Perhaps not. But she was a far better artist and a more intelligent singer.

Myself. As far as I can judge, Melba has a more perfect trill, more purity of tone and a better attack than Patti. I think you are severe. Public taste in singing is often a matter of locality. No doubt Melba's popularity is greater in England than in any other country. But there have been some great Italian singers who were failures away from Italy. Tamagno, for instance, never really was a success in New York or London.

Don Prospero. And yet he had one of the most remarkable voices the world has ever heard. The clarity and power of his high notes have never been equalled, and his diction was absolutely perfect. But I fancy the English people never care much about dramatic tenors or, as a matter of fact, opera at all.

I agreed with Don Prospero as to the English people's aversion to dramatic tenors, but thought he was wrong in saying that the English did not care about opera. The memory of the brilliant performances at Covent Garden Opera House twenty-five years ago still lingered in my mind, and I sincerely believed that the British nation would support opera all the year round if given the opportunity. These visions I conveyed to Don Prospero. He looked at me in surprise and contempt. "You were born in England, so you take a hopeful view of England's operatic future!"

Myself (a little irritated). Thank God I am not a pessimist.

Don Prospero. Do you know the best definition of a pessimist?

Myself. No.

Don Prospero. A man who once lived with an optimist.

My subsequent efforts to establish opera in London, followed by the courageous attempts of Sir Thomas Beecham, have since convinced me that Don Prospero knew more about England than either Sir Thomas or myself.

CHAPTER IV

D'ANNUNZIO

THE summer of 1912 Magda Heinemann, wife of the publisher, offered to lend me her villa at Porto d'Anzio. She was a Roman of the Romans and daughter of Sindici, the poet. Her mother was an artist of repute who painted the popular portrait of the great King Emanuel on horseback. The Sindicis also spent their summers at Porto d'Anzio and made their villa the centre of a coterie of unusual people.

Magda's villa lay within a mile of the ruins of Nero's summer palace and only forty miles from Rome. The ancients of the time of that voluptuous Emperor were men whose noses could be trusted to find corners made delectable by nature, and we can do no better than to seek those same resorts. Nowhere can the summer be richer or more full of delight than in the Campagna.

The journey from Rome to Porto d'Anzio, though less than sixty kilometres, took at least four hours, but was in itself a perfect prelude to what lay beyond. One watched from the little train, that rumbled over the plain at the average speed of twelve miles an hour, the unfolding of an amazing panorama—skeletons of aqueducts, crumbling tombs empty of their dead, mounds of earth, the relics of days when

men in search of truth burrowed underground, and noble roads as untouched by time as the hills that fringed this sunbaked mausoleum where the bones of the past lie bleaching.

The psychological effect of ruins on the contemplative mind has ever been to stir profound emotion ; and d'Annunzio in his play " La Città Morta " has used the Campagna as a setting for his most strange and subtle drama.

During that journey my thoughts often turned to the poet and Eleonora Duse, who I knew were spending their summer at the Villa Borghese, near Porto d'Anzio. The journals of Europe were filled with conjectures about their private life, but few people knew the facts of this strange liaison as it was her wish that this side of her existence should be completely hidden from the public. She gave herself to them as an artist, but demanded that as a woman she should live apart. The great actress had recently made one of the outstanding triumphs of her career as Francesca in "Francesca da Rimini," an effort that so robbed her of her strength that by the summer she was suffering from utter exhaustion. It was said that she was now living as a recluse, and that it was impossible for any one to see her. The idea, however, of living near the walls that harboured her filled me with a strange excitement.

Every few minutes my thoughts would be jerked back to reality as the train with a grinding of brakes and mists of steam stopped at the junction of roads, or where two or three ancient farms stood back to back. Engine driver, fireman and guard would leisurely descend, drink mighty draughts from straw-

coloured flasks handed them by some pretty girl, then with more salutations the train would start off again with a toot and several asthmatic snorts. Time is not money in the Roman Campagna, and appointments are the least serious things in life. What does an hour, a day, a year matter when the associations of the people extend to innumerable centuries? There is time to sing, to enjoy good red wine and even to be gracious, after awhile, to one's enemies. By the time I reached Porto d'Anzio I was so thoroughly affected by the *dolce far niente* spirit, that even now the spell still lingers with me.

In those days the little town was almost entirely unknown to tourists, and one had the sea, the hills and the plain entirely to oneself. During those long summer days while the sun reigned monarch over the baked Campagna, wise folk kept within the cool walls of the old villas. They read, drowsed and dreamt leisured dreams until the approach of dusk, when little breezes crept up from the sea that stirred the dried grasses and drove the lethargy from the minds of men. Then from the villas came the sounds of opening shutters, children rushing into the gardens, and presently their elders strolled forth to gather on some neighbouring terrace. The Sindici's villa was the acknowledged centre, and each evening on its hospitable terrace one found artists, writers and musicians. Both Donna Francesca and her husband were patrons of music, and every evening a guest would be asked to play. At other times Sindici himself would read his poems aloud, his silvery voice lending an exquisite cadence to the lines. He was a little man, thickset, with dark

eyes and the nervous vitality of the Roman. He loved to be surrounded by such groups, and the more beautiful the women in the company the more passionate would be his eloquence.

The Villa Borghese was not far away, and d'Annunzio often silently appeared among us, listening with a strange concentration to the music. At this time he was writing "La Figlia di Orio," and music was the one relaxation he allowed himself. I often watched him as he sat with half closed eyes, his dome-shaped head supported by a white hand, the pronounced eyebrows drawn together, the wide mouth and full lips half covered by a soft, up-turned moustache, the chin concealed by the close cropped pointed beard. His physical appearance was never impressive, but by the beauty of his speaking voice and the brilliance of his conversation he inevitably dominates his surroundings. Apart from his genius, he has a distinctly hypnotic power that he exercises at will. He was a lover of Wagner, and those who have read his early novel, "Il Trionfo della Morte," will remember his masterly description of the music that accompanies the death of Isolde. In "Il Fuoco" there is a touching picture of il maestro during the last weeks of his life in Venice. We often took long walks together, and I remember on one occasion when we were resting in the shade of some ruins that he inquired into the technical details of voice production, in which he seemed extremely interested. I was puzzled at first by his insistence and searching questions about modern discoveries, and little thought at that time what would be the result of those walks.

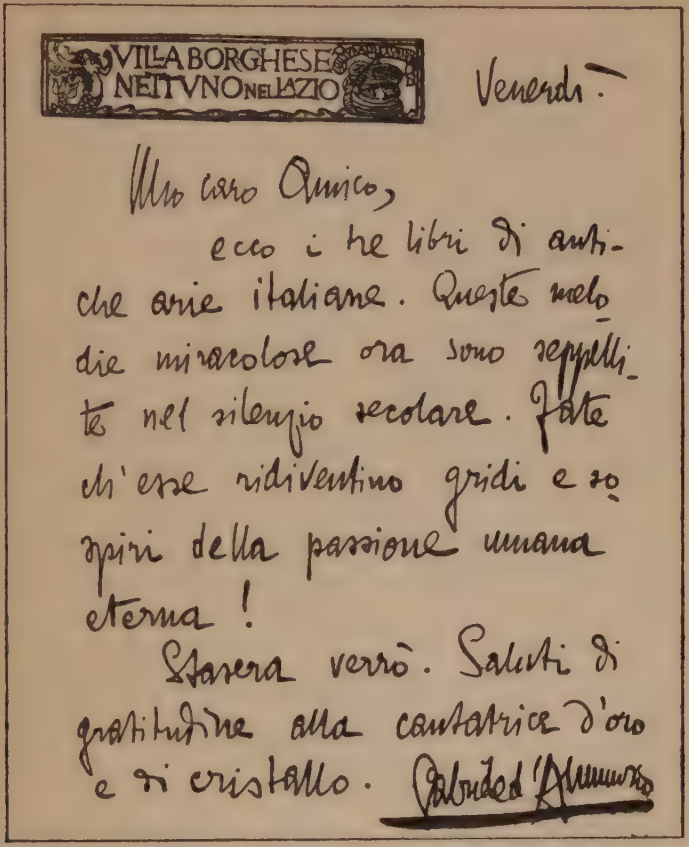
Later I realised that these inquiries were being made for the Duse, and for her alone. She had lost her voice through over-fatigue, and had practically given up hope of recovering it. I asked several times if I might be allowed to see her, but d'Annunzio only shook his head and said that she had refused to see even her most intimate friends and was living in absolute retirement in one wing of the palace.

On several occasions he invited me to accompany him to Rome, and in the cool of the evening we walked for many hours by the Tiber and through ancient streets that revealed to him the secrets of their birth. His eloquence, enthusiasm and the personal delight he took in pointing out the romantic and historic places we passed made the wanderings of unending interest. I remember at the new Law Courts how he bewailed the vulgarity of their design.

" To think," he said, with pain in his voice, " that exquisite marble hewn from our mountains should be used for such an ungainly structure as this. The blind vanity of our modern architects is inconceivable ! To think that men could build in such a way beside the world's greatest monuments !"

D'Annunzio was one of the most delightful of companions. The attractive side of his personality is little known to the world, and it is difficult not to be prejudiced against a man who caused such unmerited suffering to a woman like the Duse. He is far too close to our time for us to be able to judge him in an unbiassed way. How he will eventually be remembered it is difficult to imagine. His is a great strength tempered by weakness ; but an ex-

traordinary courage, generosity and kindness at times become his controlling emotions, and were he


VILLA BORGHESE
NETTUNO NEL LAZIO
Venerdì.
Mio caro Amico,
ecco i tre libri di antiche arie italiane. Queste melodie miracolose ora sono sepolte nel silenzio secolare. Fate ch'esse ridiventino gridi e sospiri della passione umana eterna!
Stasera verrò. Saluti di gratitudine alla cantatrice d'oro e di cristallo.
Gabriele d'Annunzio

Facsimile of letter accompanying the book of songs referred to in the following paragraph. The translation of the last sentence in letter is, "This evening I shall come to you, Salutations and gratitude to the singer of gold and crystal."

not also ruthless he probably would not have carved his way to so many artistic successes.

After these visits to Rome we would drive back to Anzio while the early morning dew still covered the

plains. Following one expedition, I received from him a book of songs, in which was written this inscription :

" Ecco i tre libri di antiche arie
Italiani. Queste melodie miracolose
ora sone seppellite nel silenzio secolare.
Fate ch' esse ridiventino gridi e sospiri
della passione umana eterna !

" Gabriele d'Annunzio.
Villa Borghese,
Nettuno nel Lazio."

" Here are three books of ancient Italian songs. These miraculous melodies have been buried in the silence of centuries. Let them once more call forth the sighs and sobs of eternal human passion."

Another evening when I was sitting alone in my villa a servant brought me the following note :—

" Caro Russell,

" Se stasera non avete niente di meglio da fare venite a Villa Borghese ? Io non esco. Ho molto lavorato. Un po di musica—mi consolerebbe.

" GABRIELE."

" Dear Russell,

" If to-night you have nothing better to do, will you come to the Villa Borghese ? I shall not go out. I have worked constantly. A little music will console me.

" GABRIELE."

This was the first time he had invited me to his home and my chief thought was that now at last I

GABRIEL D'ANNUNZIO

was to see the Duse. The Villa Borghese at Anzio was built by the same illustrious family who owned the great Villa Borghese in Rome. (The latter has been presented to the city and is now a museum.) The palazzo in the country is on the border of the Roman Campagna near Nettuno. It is built of dark stone hewn from neighbouring quarries and is forbidding and impregnable from without, the lower windows being still barred in the manner that was necessary four centuries ago. D'Annunzio occupied what is known in Italian as the " piano nobile " —the floor above the ground floor. The room which he made his study was of enormous proportions, its vaulted ceiling decorated with half faded frescoes, and the discoloured walls had many fissures only half hidden by remnants of ancient tapestries. At either end of the apartment yawned enormous hearths, whose huge marble slabs forming the mantelpieces were blackened with smoke. Heavy faded crimson curtains hung by five tall windows. There was little furniture, but that belonged to the stately Quattrocento period, the principal piece, a huge writing table piled with books and papers, dominating the centre of the room. Such was my first impression of the apartment as I saw it that evening by candlelight. Two massive candlesticks holding thick church candles were placed on the open piano in one corner, while two others cast fantastic shadows and strange flickerings over the poet at the great table.

Suddenly my host glanced up and with a gesture motioned me to the piano. I could see that he was very tired. I had heard that the effort of intense

concentration often brought on a fever, and this night it seemed as though the frame of the man was scarcely strong enough to do the bidding of his mind. On such occasions I have often seen the Duse stand behind his chair, and, as he wrote, wind cloths dipped in iced water around his forehead.

I played for nearly an hour, choosing first Liebestod, which I knew he loved. He sat absolutely motionless, his face immobile, and only when some poignant passage of Wagner woke the echoes about us could I tell by the expression of his eyes that he was following every note. He found a sensuous delight in music, and I have never played to a more responsive auditor. When my hands dropped from the keyboard in sheer fatigue I felt his hand on my shoulder.

"A thousand thanks, my friend. Your music can rest my tired brain better than anything else. To-day I have worked for seven consecutive hours on 'La Figlia di Orio.' It will be one of my best plays. But how tired I am!"

I asked whether I might hope to see the Duse, but again he shook his head, saying that he had begged her to consult me about her throat, but that she still refused to meet anyone, and he himself only saw her on rare occasions. Night after night he came to my villa and asked me to play his beloved melodies. Often only a few words would be exchanged between us, and music became the medium of our intercourse.

At the end of September I told him with great regret that I was leaving Anzio in two days' time for Rome, where my autumn work awaited me.

Once again I ventured to ask about the Duse, and he promised that he would make one more effort, but shrugged his shoulders, and I gathered that it was hopeless.

To my surprise, a few hours before my departure I received the following note :

"Villa Borghese,
"Nettuno nel Lazio.

" Caro Russell,

" La Signora Duse desidera vedervi. Sfortunatamente partite. Dove arrivate a Milano? In quale Albergo ? Forse al Cavour ? La Signora scenderă al Cavour, forse Lunedi— e la potreste incontrarla.

Dite al Domenico qualche cosa.

Ave
GABRIELE."

" Dear Russell,

" The Signora Duse desires to see you. Unfortunately you are leaving. When do you arrive in Milan ? What hotel do you go to ? Perhaps the Cavour ? The Signora will also be at the Cavour perhaps Monday. Could you arrange to meet her there ! Send me your answer by Domlinico.

Ave
GABRIELE."

All thought of my pupils quickly faded, and without a moment's hesitation I cancelled my arrangements. At last I was to see the woman who for many years I had worshipped from afar, and was filled with nervous excitement. Not long ago I heard Mr. Ernest Newman, the brilliant English critic, remark during a discussion on music and art, that

the three great people he was sorry not to have known personally were Eleonora Duse, Wagner and Liszt. I was impressed by the fact that he mentioned the Duse's name first, and when I asked him the reason he replied, " I did so because her genius and personality fascinated me more than any artist I have ever seen." This was a remarkable statement from a remarkable man.

CHAPTER V

DUSE

MY eyes blinded for a moment by the sharp sunlight in the garden, I opened the door of the great salon with a strange feeling of awe. Instantly I had the impression of straying into some chapel, so silent and shadowy was this apartment. Through one high and half-shuttered window a single radiant beam fell across a book-strewn writing table, and illuminated a carved chair, between whose arms rested a motionless figure. In this impressive chiaroscuro her form took on the semblance of a frail spirit of the Renaissance, throned in the ancient room. This woman had a sort of transparency. She was not young, but ageless, with such a noble head as the Greeks loved, a head crowned with soft hair that swept in turbulent waves from a smooth and utterly sensitive brow to be gathered into a tumbled knot at the base of the proud white neck. Her pale delicate hands lay listless in the folds of a white gown, those eloquent hands that gave expression to every human emotion, and over her rested the unnamable suggestion that here was one marked by the gods as an interpreter of mortal suffering and passion. A low voice broke the silence and the bowed head lifted. There were no idle words of greeting—the Duse had no use for them at any time.

"They tell me that you can help my voice!"

I saw the lines of suffering on the marble white features, and in the eyes, full of desolation, lay an appeal that sent the blood surging through my veins.

"May I look at your throat, Signora?" My voice trembled; I dared not advance.

She started a little, then, as though to dispel some vision, drew her fingers across her eyes, rose and held out her hands, the thin lips parting in a smile that showed the beautiful teeth. I placed my hands on her neck and gently felt the muscles of the jaw. They were, as I had imagined them, taut and hard. After a moment, to my amazement, I realised that the firm throat was relaxing. She quivered from head to foot and, gasping a little, fell back against the thick folds of the curtains.

"Your hands, Signor," she murmured, her eyes closed. "You think you can heal me?" The words were very faint.

"Yes, Signora, I think that it is possible if you will follow my advice." I, too, was filled with a curious emotion that made it difficult to speak.

"You may come to-morrow. Yes, I will do as you wish. My voice must, *must* be made well!" Her fingers locked together convulsively, and determination was written on every curve of her body—that delicate body, the vessel that held such amazing power.

The next day I returned and found the Duse waiting impatiently. The shutters had been flung open and summer heat poured in through the tall windows. She seemed charged with a strange

vitality that was directed towards one purpose—the recovery of her voice. That day the discovery that my hands had for her a curious healing power was verified. Under their touch she was able to relax the rigid muscles and to perform simple exercises that kept them flexible. From the moment she felt this power she named me "Mano Sicura" (the secure hand) and so called me to the end of her life.

Day after day she followed every word of my instructions, throwing herself heart and soul into the undertaking, and at the end of five weeks, to the amazement of her friends, she appeared completely cured. I felt that this was due partly to the power of confidence and suggestion. Once the Duse felt strength returning, she insisted on taking up work again with renewed ardour. A season at the Adelphi Theatre, London, was arranged for October, a company formed and rehearsals began immediately.

One of her most striking characteristics was an unfailing sense of gratitude; and after the recovery of her voice she sent the following letter to all the important papers in England:

"Adelphi Theatre,
"October 14th.

"To the Editor,

"Dear Sir,

"In the interests of a great art, may I ask the hospitality of your columns to give publicity to this letter?

"There are thousands to-day whose careers depend upon the human voice, and there are

thousands who never realise it, until from abuse, neglect and wrong use the organ ceases to perform its function. Then the whole of the voice-dependent community implores assistance and seeks relief. Burnings, scrapings, periods of enforced silence, water cures—all have to be endured with more or less indifferent results; meanwhile the singer or speaker whose voice is failing is doomed to suffer, and very often to retire.*

"Is it possible that in this age of science there exists no body of men who consider the subject worthy of special thought and special study? One of your countrymen has made a step forward in this direction, and, while yet on British shores, I want to testify as to its importance, in the hope that others may follow his example.

"Yours truly,

"ELEONORA DUSE."

I soon felt that the time had come for me to return to Rome as several prominent pupils were awaiting my instruction. The Duse, however, would not hear of my leaving her. She was still frail, and, although her voice grew more beautiful from day to day, we all realised that more sorrow or worry might rob her of it again. I made arrangements for others to take care of my interests, and for no less than two years remained constantly by her side. At times I felt keen pangs of remorse at the thought of those abandoned pupils, and realised that I was not treating them fairly. I tried to conceal these qualms

* When Duse wrote this letter the subject of voice production had not been studied as seriously as it has been lately.

from my friend, but she unfailingly discovered them, reproaching herself with selfishness.

I remember that when she heard of one young artist who was failing through lack of assistance, she wrote the following letter and insisted that the singer should come to Paris at her expense. This was typical of her fine feeling of consideration for others.

" To the ' Secure Hand.'

" This is my prayer to you—to beg you in my name to invite the little distant friend to come here. She must not suffer any more, nor, through her suffering, make others suffer uselessly and unjustly. I enclose a first-class train fare from Milan to Paris. I wish I could send her much more. In order to help me, true and faithful Russell, I must be certain that no one else suffers. It would be unjust.

" ELEONORA DUSE."

I received many notes in which she expressed her appreciation of even little services that one was able to render.

" Dear Friend,

" I know how much I owe you, and shall await my opportunity to tell of my gratitude and faith in you. I thank you for having arrived on my path at the moment when I had lost hope of help. It will be a blessing to my art, if, through it, I can comprehend and make clear to others your art. I thank you with all my heart.

" ELEONORA DUSE."

She often overrated the value of my assistance, and the humility of her appreciation was at times overwhelming. Such as the following telegram :

" Paris.

" I believe in Henry Russell. Here is the loyal and sweet word of Nessuna."

One would hesitate to quote such a message but that it shows the almost childlike simplicity of the great actress. Another naïve telegram was in reply to a message I sent her about a person who was endeavouring to make her accept an untruth.

" Rome.

" I shall leave this evening. Force will win over force. Everyone has his own truth ; and the truth itself has a thousand faces. Thus do I reply to his idea. I shall remain Monday night in Venice. I adore Venice and shall remain all Tuesday and Wednesday. I adore seeing Venice again."

The season at the Adelphi in London during the autumn of 1903 was an outstanding success, and never for a moment did she allow any personal suffering, either mental or physical, to affect her art. Though at that time I was staying as her guest at the Savoy Hotel, she would often write me notes reflecting the torment and strain she was suffering through the breaking of her relations with d'Annunzio.

Those who knew them both intimately realised that between two such electric beings there could never be complete peace. One was attuned in every

fibre of her being to receive and register every possible human emotion. The other, a man of vivid imagination and feeling, was a transmitter, and gave off to the world the pulsations of an extraordinary mind. Thus it came about that these two natures found everything in each other as long as they confined themselves to the creative realm of art, but, outside that realm, the very qualities of their diverse genius were an inevitable cause of friction. Eleonora the woman was in love with the genius of the poet, captivated by the fire and passion of his imagination, held by the hypnotic power that drew to him things both physical and spiritual. She ignored his inconsistencies and the eccentricities of his temperament, belittled his faults and deplored her own inefficiency to interpret his creations. She never reproached him for anything he said or did, unless he criticised her as an artist or inferred that she was incapable of interpreting certain rôles. Some slight remark in a letter from d'Annunzio, which a less sensitive nature would have ignored, would cause her hours of deep melancholy.

She had no patience or tolerance for any one who questioned the beauty or fitness of his dramas; and when she was staging "La Gioconda" and "Francesca da Rimini" she became as an inspired prophet, working day and night to perfect the smallest detail of the *mise-en-scene*, and giving to every minor part the same devoted study as she did to her own interpretation of the principal rôle. She worked with an almost religious fervour and considered that to reveal this man's genius was the sacred and only duty of her life.

I would often find her with her head buried in the pillow, sobbing as if her heart would break. When I approached, she would cry out in agony, " I look too old to play Francesca ; it requires a younger woman. D'Annunzio thinks so, although he may not say it, and he is right. I wish we could find somebody who has my talent and who is young and beautiful as well."

Thus she consecrated her life to his genius, and the noble struggle to force the world to recognise d'Annunzio's plays proved disastrous to her financially and physically. But to the end she kept faith. Every lire of the fortune she made by producing popular plays was sunk in his dramatic experiments. Her adoring audiences cared little for artistic merit in these dramas, only asking that she should play the leading part, and they liked her best in " Camille," " Magda " and " La Femme de Claude," all plays in which she personally took little or no artistic interest.

After the twenty-one years of our friendship, her parting words to me in the Hotel Excelsior in Naples the December of 1921, were: " At last, thank God! I think that the world is beginning to recognise the brilliant genius and dominating force of Gabriele d'Annunzio."

One of her favourite plays was " La Città Morta," and she wished most of all to produce it in London. The idea became an obsession, and as we discussed the cast and details our enthusiasm increased. After the arrangements had been made I received the following letter from Gabriele :

" My dear Friend,

" Last night came the news that ' La Città Morta ' has been prohibited. The English Censor has committed, without doubt, a vulgar error. If you can, try to start a movement in London among men of taste and your friends the critics which will culminate in a general agitation to abolish this prohibition. If you think fit, I will write a letter of protest to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Take council from among those who are considered authorities in such matters.

" Cordial salutations,

" GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO."

He fully realised what effect the news would have on the Duse, and was afraid to communicate it directly. Her rage, when I read the letter to her was magnificent—something like the sudden precipitation of a tropical thunder storm ; and it passed as quickly. The breakfast table, fortunately, had only been laid for one, but was covered with an accumulation of china and silver. Duse, who had been pacing nervously up and down the room, suddenly stopped in front of me, her voice trembling with rage.

" Frankly, I want to know the worst. Do you think that this idiotic Censor can be forced to change his mind ?"

Having myself experienced the limitations of British censorship, I realised that there was little hope, and shook my head.

A sudden quiver of anger passed through her. With a tragic gesture, she seized the tablecloth and with a wrench sent the silver and crockery crashing

to the four corners of the room. This destruction seemed to relieve her; then, with a smile, more divine than that of any woman I have ever seen, announced her change of mood, and bursting into laughter, cried out, "Please ring the bell." An Italian waiter appeared at the door.

"Tell the manager to send me the bill. England will pay a bigger price than this for her ignorance and stupidity." She made a gesture of dismissal, but the servant remained spellbound. Then, seeing his bewilderment, she explained simply, "These things occur in mad-houses and when artists lose their heads."

Her sense of humour bubbled up at unexpected moments, seeming clearer and more sparkling when it came from a well of tragedy. Her emotions were always entirely spontaneous, like little bundles that had to be got rid of, lest they impede her way.

Eloquent and amusing notes and letters ran from her pen. Even in her most poverty stricken days she indulged in the luxury of long expressed telegrams that she insisted on sending "urgent," though in Italy this is very costly. The reason she gave for the extravagance was that she liked messages to reach the recipient red-hot. For many years I have kept a sheaf of yellow papers registering the frank outpourings of moods that had vanished before their news arrived.

"I beg you to tell me whether between yesterday and to-day you are of the same opinion, viz, if you are really convinced that you adore

"ELEONORA DUSE

"ELEONORA DUSE

"ELEONORA DUSE."

There is a touch of humour in the following succinct message :

" Unless you come here within five minutes I shall be dead.

" ELEONORA DUSE."

Once when she was in Paris and I was in Rome she wired :

" I beg you to salute on my behalf some beautiful fountain in Rome. Here are heat and dust, and a life of tittle-tattle and outside appearances ; but it is impossible to go elsewhere, therefore I must continue.

" ELEONORA."

It was followed the next day by another :

" Great fatigue and the sunshine of spring which makes one so melancholy—so melancholy."

I remember one that reached me from Turin that is curious for its signature :

" Thank you for your nice telegram—a really friendly word consoles one so much.

" Nobody, Nobody, Nobody."

The word " none " or " nobody " is the best translation of Nessuna. The Duse's use of it as a signature was due both to the tragic and humorous attitude she had towards herself. There were times and moments in her life when she felt completely

lost in murky clouds of depression and melancholy. She often remarked that she must be less than nobody, or life would not deal with her so cruelly. She would add with a wistful smile, " I am absolutely nothing and no one, just as we all are in this strange scheme of creation. It is quite silly to take oneself seriously, and henceforth, my friend, you can call me Nessuna, and I shall sign my letters in the same way." This is the curious nickname she chose for herself to the end of our friendship.

Like many other great people, she was not really musical, but recognised in Wagner some force that gave her a feeling of exaltation which she found in the music of no other composer. Frequently, after an evening performance, when she had eaten her supper in utter silence, she would suddenly ask me to play the cor anglais solo from the last act of " Tristan." It is played by the shepherd while the dying hero lies praying for the return of the ship that is to bring Isolde. It is a strangely melancholy air, and never failed both to divert and soothe her overwrought brain. I remember receiving this note one morning after I had played for her :

> " The music—I felt it in the depths of me—has all these days made my soul suffer so much. The first notes of that last act of " Tristan and Isolde " (what sunshine—sunshine in the world of art) convey one moment in the life of a soul ; thus with these few notes I have lived away beyond all life and all pain. Thank you for having understood.
>
> " E. D."

I often accompanied her to the opera on Wagner nights. She always refused to sit in a box or stalls, and invariably chose the cheapest seats, saying that the people in the gallery were better listeners than those in the more expensive parts of the house; and as she felt the atmosphere of an audience acutely, she preferred to sit among them. "When poor people make an effort to pay for a seat in the gallery," she would say, "they do so for the joy of hearing an opera they love; whereas the stalls and boxes are generally occupied by those who are there to be seen as much as to see and hear."

The Duse was marvellously good to women. There was no moral or physical pain suffered by her own sex with which by experience she was not in sympathy, and she was always ready to extol any other woman at her own expense. The generosity of her judgment was such that she would exaggerate the qualities of a friend, while at the same time underestimating herself. A letter written from the Hotel Bristol, Rome, in April, 1914, is an illustration of this characteristic:

"Only and best friend of mine,

"I render my thanks to you for having given me the opportunity of knowing 'N.' No woman is as pure as 'N'—no one so loyal, no one so faithful. To have been able to understand and know so complete a woman, I thank you; and I beg you to like me also, not as much as 'N,' but together with 'N.' I am neither as pure, nor as loyal, nor as faithful as 'N,' but I possess a

small part of that light—that is if my soul has properly understood it—always yours.

"ELEONORA DUSE."

To the end of her life she had always near her devoted women friends, always willing to help and extol young actresses, and the training they received from her often proved the starting point in their careers.

She had borne every pain known to woman. Her first child died in its infancy and this tragedy was closely followed by the death of its father, Martino Cafiero, a young Neapolitan journalist with whom she was deeply in love. For sometime after these blows she was as one crushed both mentally and physically.

Several years later, in 1881, she married Teobaldo Marchitti, an actor who had watched her develop from a child of the stage into a genius. In many respects they were useful to each other, and, although there was never a "grande passion" between them, he undoubtedly helped her over several difficult years. But the acclamations of the whole world and the birth of a daughter did not lift the mask of sorrow from her face.

Relations between the great actress and her daughter have often been misinterpreted. The girl had an unaffected and charming personality, but apparently inherited no other traits of her mother. One curious characteristic of the Duse was a form of self-depreciation, amounting sometimes to absolute self-loathing. Although entirely devoid of pedantry, and never a moralist, she considered that to be an

actress was beneath the dignity of a mother. Maternity, strange though it may sound, came first with her. Thus the presence of her own daughter at any performance was distasteful to her. She also thought the girl was not sympathetic to her art, and that she was inclined to criticise her mother in ways moral and artistic. I had many conversations with Enrichetta, but found only admiration in the girl's mind, and if she disapproved of her brilliant parent, she took care not to disclose it to strangers. The fact remains, however, that whenever mother and daughter were together things went wrong with the Duse, and, although she was kind and good to the girl in every possible way, her presence always unsettled the great artist and made it almost impossible for her to work. They were, in short, not sympathetic.

" Faithful Friend,

" I telegraphed to you yesterday that I was ill. Here are the facts. This wretched Nice has given Enrichetta a terrible cold. From Enrichetta this cold has passed to me a real courbature of all the bones. Enrichetta completely lost her voice, and (strange phenomenon), I myself was for two hours entirely without my voice.

" It was a case of sudden influence or sympathy, but the fact remains, that, finding myself without articulation and having to perform in the evening, an atrocious impatience took hold of me and I telegraphed for you.

" I beg you to have patience with these meteoric telegrams. Whilst you have need of peace, as

does everyone who works, you also need to know in time, so that you can arrange your hours for everything and every person who has claims on you, yet I telegraphed from a room in the theatre as cold as death and a furious wind from the sea which came in through all the windows and corridors around me—my feet frozen, my head on fire, and all the time tormented by anxiety of the fixed hour which would oblige me to perform without a voice. Yet by literally whipping myself to action, I did it ; and as my voicelessness was only a phenomenon of sympathy due to Enrichetta's voicelessness, after two hours of solitude in the theatre, my speech returned, but it is no longer the speech I had in London. . . . .

"Once more excuse me for sending you the telegram, and thanks for the quickness and goodness of your answer."

Nothing could be more eloquent testimony to the Duse's hyper-sensitiveness than the above. It shows how the mere suggestion of a voiceless person made her voiceless. This will give an idea of her capacity for suffering, and of nerves so sensitively tuned that at the mere suggestion of another's pain it became her own. She was yet another proof that the frailest body can be capable of extraordinary spiritual and mental strength.

Her ill-health was due, to some extent, to her parentage and the trials of her early life. A child of actors whose whole existence was spent in touring the length and breadth of Italy with a second-rate company, she was always homeless, constantly

penniless and at all times anxious. There were few happy moments during her youth, and from a mere babe she was given small parts and practically earned the few lire that supplied her meagre food and clothing. Her mother, whose devotion and sympathy was the one light of her childhood, died when she was fourteen. Being at that time delicate from the strain and hardships of the stage, the Duse was in no fit state to bear such a sorrow, and undoubtedly bore traces of it all her life. For years she suffered from a chronic cough and was extremely sensitive to climatic conditions. She was never at any time able to enjoy complete rest, and her sleep seldom lasted for more than three or four hours at a time. This, added to a naturally melancholy and tragic temperament, made life at times a heavy burden.

Many of the notes she wrote me contained plaintive and sometimes whimsical references to her ill-health and sleeplessness.

"Savoy Hotel, London.

"October 25th.

"Notwithstanding the 'Secure Hand' which helps and protects, yesterday's unfortunate matinée prevented me from sleeping. This morning I feel quite stupid, and city life seems to be more absurd and crude than ever.

"Who can say how the beautiful sun is shining in the fields in some remote corner of this world. Cultivate your gardens.

"E. Duse."

"Hotel Bristol, Rome.
"15th March.

"I am a little better, but not well. Since the day I fell ill in Genoa it seems as if one hundred thousand years have passed. I wish I could write to you in English, so that I might be certain of being well understood by you; but since this is not possible, I had better say nothing. Perhaps one day verbally I shall be able to tell you, oh, good and faithful friend, what life has done to my soul. I don't know what I shall do, where I shall go, how I shall live—I know nothing at this moment.
"E. Duse."

Of all man-created structures, theatres are the coldest, draughtiest and most uncomfortable. In Italy, twenty years ago, their inconveniences were almost death-traps for the delicate. The Duse's fear of cold was a demon that for ever pursued her. She feared the cold blast that often swept through the wings on to the stage, and the lack of consideration of the average manager irritated her to the point of exasperation. On one occasion her wrath was so great that she conveyed it to me in a lengthy telegram:

"Torino,
"12th Feb., 1905.

"Dear Russell,

"I have taken this charming attack of fever because the other evening after the theatre, and while I was overheated, my manager stopped me between the draughty stairs and the open door, compelling me to listen to his eternal little troubles.

It is difficult to make these people understand that I am not an ox, but merely a woman who has a right to some consideration—impossible. Meanwhile, I am tormented because to-night the fever is very high, although I hope it is only a passing attack.

" Heavenly Patience."

The pleasant hours of her life she wished to share with her friends, and when she was feeling well and cheerful the news was speedily communicated to them; but, unfortunately, telegrams announcing that she had slept unusually well and that health had triumphed over sickness, were few.

" March, 1905

" Cannes.

" Good morning, good work. Serenity and light in my soul. Thank you for everything. I am well—I slept well. The hotel is tranquil. Peace and work and intellect ready to understand everything. Thank you always."

" Last night I slept one entire sleep until seven a.m. I neither dreamt of angels nor of demons. Thank you."

One of the most remarkable phases of the temperament of the great actress was her power of self-hypnotism. She lived so entirely and absolutely in the rôle of the moment that she came off the stage like a somnambulist, entirely unconscious of her own identity. The greatest kindness that one could then show her was to allow her to pass unnoticed to her dressing-room, and to leave her quite alone for at least twenty minutes.

She found nothing more offensive than any form of idle curiosity, or the attempt of the outside world to peer into her seclusion. In this respect she differed completely from her contemporary, Sarah Bernhardt. However, on all occasions she was courteous and charming to the crowd of admirers that often stood in rain or snow for hours for the pleasure of watching her step across the pavement to a carriage. Although completely enshrouded in a great black cloak covering her from head to foot, she would then pause a moment with hands outstretched to the eager group, giving every sign of sympathy and goodwill.

Duse's entire passion centred on the dramas she interpreted. It was the fundamental idea of each one that appealed to her. She disliked the artificiality of scenery, and always longed for an open air theatre where she could act quite independently of ordinary stage fripperies. Never at any time in the days of her triumphs did she allow herself to be lionized by society. She felt keenly the pleasure and approval of an audience, but cared little for the ravings of critics and scarcely ever read a press notice.

Like all great women, there was something of the man in her that made her disdain feminine frivolities. She had exquisite taste, and in the many villas that from time to time she made her home, she surrounded herself with simple things, but all harmonious and beautiful. She would never allow her initials to be engraved on any article she used, and never wasted time on details connected with clothes or self-adornment. To flattery, self-advertisement and the vanities of life she gave not a thought, lead-

ing an existence of severe simplicity, austere and almost monastic. Contact with things of the earth hurt her divine sensibilities, and her one desire was to understand perfectly the realities of life—and then get away from them. Her unfailing means of escape was through her books. At all times she was an omnivorous reader, and during her life collected a rare and interesting library which she kept in her villa in Florence. She called Dante her prayer book, and slept with a volume by her bedside. Her brain was masculine in its understanding of world problems and she delighted in all scientific discoveries. It was an unusual fastidiousness that made her choose always the best in art and literature, and disdain the vulgar and second-rate.

" Hotel Bristol,
" Rome.

" Only and best Friend,

" I am a little better. I was unable yesterday to read the whole of " Monna Vanna," because I was too tired. I read instead a few of its beautiful pages, and then slept. That the relaxation of sleep restores one's force is very true.

" This morning I telephoned Frascati to know whether I could find rooms. If I decide to go to Frascati, I shall leave this evening ; but I don't yet know whether it really would not be as well to risk a week in Paris to get myself in tune with all the activities which recall one to work. We will talk about this at four o'clock when I come to Rocca-Giovine.

" Please remember to invite the little one in my name, because I want to hear her beautiful

voice. It is a force which helps one to dream and protects from life's daily realities.

"Don't waste time composing an answer to this letter—there is no need.

"ELEONORA."

I had known her intimately for many months, when suddenly I realised that I had never been invited to a meal. One day I ventured to ask whether I might remain to dinner, and asked why she always preferred to eat alone.

"I never invite anyone to have meals with me," she answered. "If it amuses you to stay, please do so; but don't expect even the smallest courtesies of the table from me, because I shall take no notice, and will probably not speak at all."

This indeed was exactly what occurred, and never on any occasion did I see her attempting to act as hostess.

Sometimes when I entered her room in the morning, she would announce: "To-day, my friend, everything is closed in me, and, like your great English author, Macaulay, I would like to build an altar to silence and solitude."

By evening her mood might have entirely changed, and after she had recovered from an amazing interpretation of an old rôle (she never played a rôle in the same way twice) she would greet me laughingly: "To-night I must talk. If it will bore you to listen, then you can leave me alone—but I will talk just the same. Sooner the four walls than an unwilling listener."

On these rare occasions she would often flash a

light on some brilliant moment of her passionate life. I remember her telling me of how once when she was seventeen, and already well-known in Italy, she left the theatre, and instead of returning to her hotel, walked in the streets of Turin until after two o'clock in the morning. "Can you guess," she asked with an expression of infinite pain in her eyes, "can you guess why I paced those streets—a mere girl—a stranger to life! It was because I needed love! I was seeking love—I knew not how or where, but I walked on and on. The thought of returning to my lonely room was impossible. So I walked and walked, still looking for love, until dawn broke and fatigue compelled me to seek my bed."

Then she related with a whimsical smile how, having met a man she thought she loved, she arranged to meet him at midnight after a performance. At eleven o'clock she returned to her hotel with an hour to wait, she threw herself on her sofa and fell fast asleep. She did not awaken until an hour after the time for the appointment with her lover. "This was enough," she said; "the fact that I overslept myself proved that I did not love him, and I broke off everything between us."

She liked to talk of Arrigo Boito, the only person, excepting d'Annunzio, who had ever completely satisfied her. During the years I spent with her I saw much of him, and they often met in my studio in Rome. Boito was a man of remarkable culture, with wide sympathies and interests. For years he and the Duse spent their summers together, and she often told me that the calmest and happiest hours of her life were those passed with him.

Then her restless spirit and dynamic force demanded a more virile companion, and hour after hour she grew weary of hearing him say that his new opera " Nerone " was not yet completed. At the end of the last summer they passed together, he promised faithfully that on her return from Russia, where she was to fulfil a long engagement, she should find " Nerone " ready for production. Six months later he met her at the Gare St. Lazare in Paris ; again to her utter disappointment she heard that the opera was unfinished, and, instead of going to her villa which was near his, she left at once for Venice. It was the morning after her arrival and while watching the sunrise from the Piazza di San Marco that she met d'Annunzio.

Boito's love for Duse was so great that though he recovered from the shock of her desertion, and realised that another had taken his place, he continued to be a devoted friend until the day of his death. When that news came, I heard her say, while the tears streamed down her cheeks, " His loss has left an irreparable blank in my life. I never gave to any one else what I gave to him of myself, and I have never known a man whose character I loved and admired more than I did his."

The meeting of Duse and d'Annunzio, those two great Latin forces, was like an impact of two meteors. Each being irresistibly drawn towards the other by an elemental force, there was instant understanding between the creative genius of the man and the interpretative power of the other. The result was the production of pure art for the world.

One unforgettable evening she told me the story

ARRIGO BOITO

of how they found each other and the days that followed. Her eyes flashed with anger when she described a friend, whom she had known for twenty years, calling upon her early one morning with warnings of d'Annunzio's failings. The friend implored her to avoid knowing the poet intimately, and justified his reasons with many statements of facts. "I begged him to be gone," she said, and added vindictively, "No man, not even in the name of friendship, has the right to destroy our illusions."

Her private affairs, which she desired so strongly to be kept private, have by her biographers, in many instances, been carelessly described. There were only two men in her life who really mattered to her, Boito and d'Annunzio. Worth, the designer, was just a devoted friend. She was grateful to him for all he taught her in the art of costuming, and appreciated the exquisite creations he made for her; but never at any time was she in love with him.

Unlike nearly all other great actresses, Duse was entirely unsnobbish, and there were innumerable occasions when she refused to be presented to crowned heads and princes of royal blood. During April of 1903, when she was living quietly at the Villa Igea in Palermo, we were asked by the Princess Julia Trabia to a reception given for the German Emperor. The Princess was a great friend of the Duse and they often spent hours alone together; but this invitation was declined, and the Duse spent the entire day in her room, taking not the slightest interest in the festivities that had been arranged. I had met Florio, the shipping magnate, brother of the Princess Julia, in Rome. He was devoted to music, and it

was he who discovered the beautiful Cavalieri. I also knew the Princess and her husband slightly, and accepted their invitation to meet the Emperor with the eager curiosity of youth.

The scene that took place in the ancient Palazzo that brilliant spring day is still a vivid memory. The castle is built on old Moorish walls, and the main façade faces the Bay of Palermo, being flanked on that side by a terrace twenty feet broad, on to which the magnificent reception rooms open directly. The rooms are decorated in different styles and periods—a Louis Quinze ball-room is hung with cream taffetas draperies, hand painted and embroidered with violets, ostrich feathers and true lovers' knots. Massive gilded doors separate it from the Chinese room, where from marble cornices hang magnificent Eastern tapestries. The Red Damask room is richly panelled and decorated with Italian secco work, while an exact copy of this chamber in miniature is cut in the thickness of the wall and forms a tiny oratory. Collections of priceless pictures, china, carved ivories and treasures from the East fill the procession of smaller apartments; and the library harbours an amazing collection of manuscripts, numbering nearly fifteen thousand, relating to the history of Sicily and chronicles of the family.

This visit of the Emperor was by no means his first, and nothing had been spared by his noble hosts to make the occasion magnificent and stately. Flowers were brought from all parts of Italy, cooks procured from Rome and Naples, and the best musicians obtained. The terraced gardens themselves were visions of delight. There were booms of

welcome as the Kaiser's yacht, the " Hohenzollern," steamed up the Gulf, escorted by a small flotilla of cruisers gleaming white in the sunshine.

During the afternoon I was presented to his Majesty as a young musician. He was, at that time, much absorbed in music and keenly enthusiastic about Leoncavallo's " Pagliacci." He considered him to be the finest composer of the Italian school. Quite forgetting that one should not disagree with the opinions of Prussian royalty, I ventured to remark that I considered Leoncavallo but a poor imitator of Mascagni and Puccini. To which he answered that " Pagliacci " was as popular as anything written by either Mascagni or Puccini. I remember my surprise on finding that such a German of the Germans could exalt an alien musician above supreme masters like Beethoven and Wagner.

During a visit of the Emperor to the Trabias he was accompanied by the Empress. She appeared one evening in an amazing gown composed of tiers of red, yellow and orange ruffles. The Kaiser, noticing that the creation had startled the guests, smiled proudly and announced: " On dit que les femmes de Palermo sont trés chic. Il faut que ma femme soît aussi chic. J'ai désigne le costume moi-même." On his departure, the royal guest, as was his custom, presented a gift to his hostess. Once, after a stay of several days, when a battle of flowers and other entertainments had been given in his honour, the presentation to the Princess Julia took the form of a common china egg, manufactured in one of his factories near Berlin.

But this, alas, was over twenty years ago, and how

unbelievably scattered are those gay people! Many are dead, others in disgrace, and only the Palazzo stands untouched by time like the spirit of the noble family whose name it bears. The passage of time only makes it more wonderful than ever. The war robbed the Trabias of two brilliant sons, but their love to their country remains steadfast, and whatever régime may deprive them of their rightful power, something greater than authority will always be theirs.

The following year my work called me to London, and, although until the day of her death our friendship continued, I only saw the Duse at infrequent intervals. One of the last letters I received from her during this period was the following:

"Rimini,
"19th August, 1904.

"Dear and Faithful Friend,

"I have been ill in my soul and my body, and the atrocious need of solitude and silence is the only desire of my heart; but solitude and silence are such treasures, that it would appear that destiny will not give them to me, at least for the present.

"The date fixed for the renewal of my work was the 22nd of the present month. After many negotiations everything was arranged, when a bad cold, a return of my obstinate cough and a doctor called in by the M. . . .'s prevented me from fulfilling my engagements. Thus I can only hope to start work again in October. I cannot tell you how much this doing nothing, without being able to live in silence, weighs on me. As here I am a guest of others, I sent my old maid, Nina, back to

ELEONORA DUSE

Florence ; therefore, as I had nobody to do anything for me, I could not telegraph you on your arrival in Rome as the Post Office is three quarters of an hour's journey from this villa 'N.' I give you these small details to show you how sometimes the little circumstances of life give one as much annoyance as the big. In September I will write telling you whether I shall go to London, when I shall hope to see you.

"At present I am so utterly sad and melancholy that I prefer to remain silent, and would that I could be silent for ever.

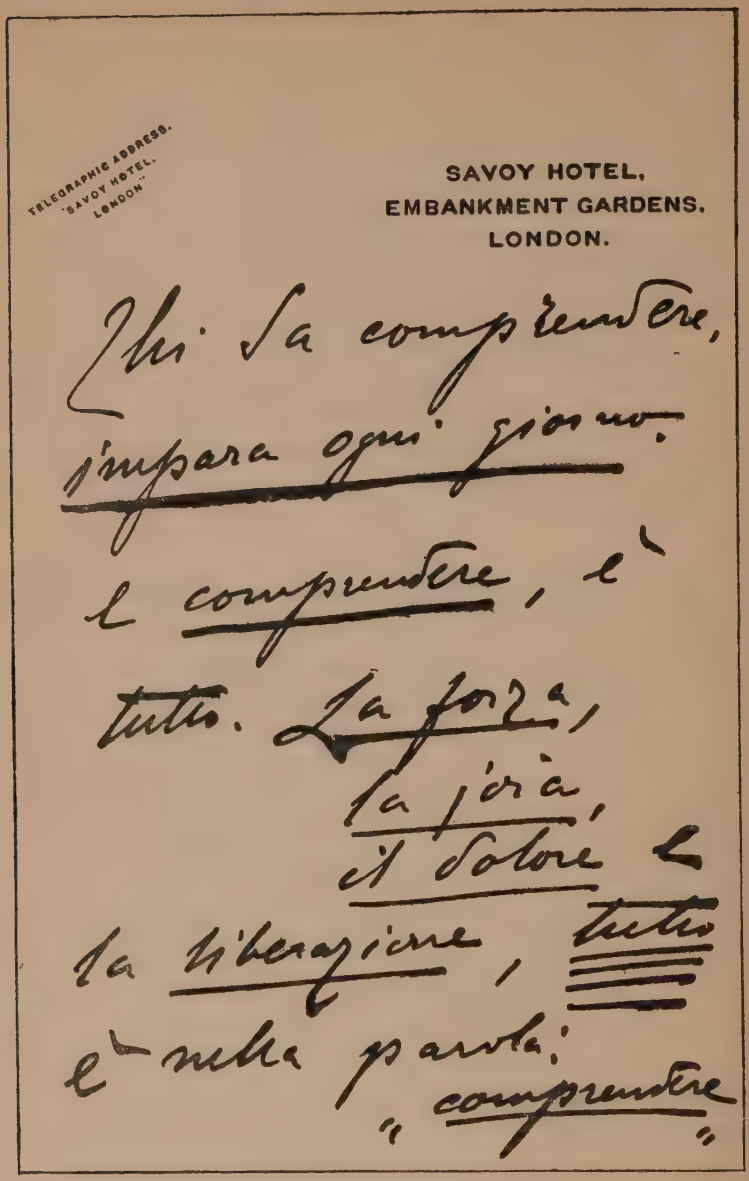
"Salutations and good wishes. I hope you are in Anzio. Salve.

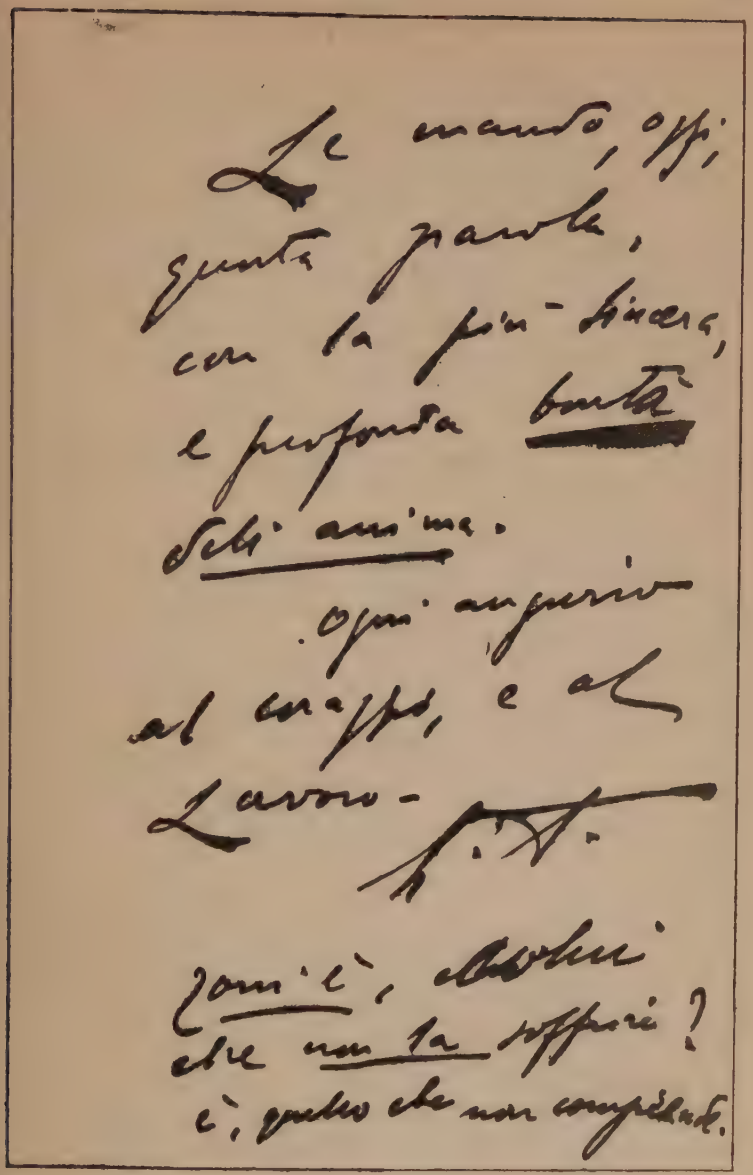
"E. Duse."

The failing health and mental suffering resulting from her relations with d'Annunzio forced her to retire for many years from public life. During these years of effacement she was unhappy and restless, moving from place to place, and even forced to accept the hospitality of friends—to her a form of torture, since independence and absolute freedom were instinctive requirements of her nature.

My work called me to America, and after my departure the Duse abandoned the stage for an indefinite time. Occasional letters arrived ; then in 1914 came a most welcome one from d'Annunzio.

On the notepaper was printed as heading : "Me ne frego," which means "I don't care a damn," or the equivalent of the French, "Je m'en fiche."


TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS.
"SAVOY HOTEL,
LONDON"
SAVOY HOTEL,
EMBANKMENT GARDENS,
LONDON.
Chi sa comprendere,
impara ogni giorno.
Il comprendere, è
tutto. La forza,
la gioia,
il dolore e
la liberazione, tutto
è nella parola:
"comprendere"



Le mando, oggi,
questa parola,
con la più sincera,
e profonda bontà
dell'anima.
Ogni augurio
al coraggio, e al
Lavoro -
F. A.

Come è, chi vuol
che non la soffrire?
è, quello che non comprende.

" Paris.

" My dear Friend,

" I cannot tell you how pleased I was to see you again and to find in you the same warm cordiality and the same ray of sunlight of Anzio. My convalescence makes me highly sensitive to music. I shall come to the Wagnerian circle with ecstasy. Here is my address. Come and see me soon, dear friend. Don't forget my darling Fedra which awaits indication.

" I clasp your hand,

" Yours,

" GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO."

I hastened to him almost immediately and we spent the evening together. He told me that the Duse's health and nervous condition were causing him great anxiety, and that though he had implored her to return to the stage, his pleadings had been of no avail. We sent her a joint telegram, and I offered to place the Théatre des Champs-Elysées, of which I was director, at her disposal. A few hours later a brief message arrived, saying that she preferred her own seclusion.

During the war she worked unceasingly for the wounded, and many tales are told of her devotion and kindly actions. Her generosity at all times was such that had she possessed millions, the result would have been the same. She could only say " no" when there was no more to give, and then it would be said as apologetically as though she was in the wrong, and not the person who had taken advantage of her liberality. Having spent her last lire and

given herself to the limit of her strength, by the end of the war she was penniless and more frail than ever before. The story of her sufferings had been made known to the world, and she was offered a pension by Mussolini from the Italian Government. This, her pride forced her to refuse, and once more she was compelled to return to the stage and toured triumphantly Italy, England and finally America.

Born during a tour of her parents' company, she died en route on one of her own, and the tragic end came in Pittsburg. Her tired body was brought home to Italy, and the last rites were celebrated with the pomp and ceremony that is usually given only to royalty. Her grave lies among the pines on the hillside of Asolo. She will be remembered, I think, not as the great actress, but as " l'âme bien né "— a woman exquisitely feminine, generous and tender, accepting nothing, giving all things ; whose sympathies were boundless and whose love of art dominated her whole life. " Hers was the head upon which all ' the ends of the world are come,' and the eyelids are a little weary. It has a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions."

Translation of a letter from Eleonora Duse to Henry Russell facsimile of which appears on pages 100 and 101:—

Who knows how to understand, learns every day. To understand is everything. It is force, it is joy, it is pain, and it is liberation. Everything is contained in the words: "To understand." I send you to-day this word with the most sincere and profound goodness of my soul.

Every good wish and all courage in your work. He who does not know how to suffer is he who has never understood.

E.D.

CHAPTER VI

OPERA IN LONDON

THE two years I spent with the Duse awakened and developed what has always been my greatest passion—the stage. As I watched her arrange performances, direct rehearsals and create herself new rôles, I realized that to be a director myself was my fundamental ambition. Later I was able to assist d'Annunzio with the production of several of his new plays, and so, from two of the greatest geniuses of the modern stage, gathered a knowledge of technique that was my greatest asset in the days to come.

Duse proclaimed her gratitude far and wide for the part I had played in the recovery of her voice, giving me an extraordinary amount of publicity. There was now no longer any doubt as to my being able to earn a living as a teacher in Rome or elsewhere, and I was followed from place to place by eager and confident pupils. But no matter how brilliant my prospects as a teacher might be, I could not contemplate returning to the comparatively dull life of a singing master. Yet how was I, a person of no actual experience, to convince the theatrical magnates that I was capable of directing the difficult course of a theatre? Suddenly, however, the chance I had longed for presented itself, making me intensely happy until I realized what seemed the overwhelming difficulties that accompanied it. These staggered

even my exuberant self-confidence. To accept the offer meant an abrupt change of career. Was I justified or not? I sorely needed advice and encouragement, and searched my mind for some sage who would give it. I thought of my friend Don Prospero Cellini, and took the train at once for Naples, and later the boat for Capri, where he had built his hermitage.

The island, that evening, seemed like a lump of amethyst floating towards the sunset. As the steamer drew nearer, between the rocks appeared dull green patches of vineyards, and white specks that were villas clinging to the hillside. Small boats were waiting in the harbour to row us to the landing stage. From the Grande Marina I climbed into the waiting funicular which lifted one gently up from the small beach through a flower-lined gash in the side of the hill. Blossoms, trailing vines and orange trees sent out their fragrance as we passed them by on our way to the town, perched on the saddle of the island. The men in the front of the car sang plaintively to the accompaniment of the women's Caprese babble, until with a sudden bump we reached the top of the incline. I rubbed my eyes as I stepped out on the piazza. On two sides were shops like dimly-lit caverns, separated here and there by dark archways leading to steep tunnel-like streets. On the third side the Cathedral, approached by a wide, steep flight of steps, loomed against the dusk. The fourth side, bordered by a terrace, swung far out over the hill, like a stage into some vast auditorium. I stood for a moment bewildered by the superb vista of mountain, garden and sea. Across the bay the

lights of Naples twinkled in a small semi-circle. To the East the dark flanks of Vesuvius steamed with slow deliberation. I wondered if ambition and achievement were worth the accompanying fret and worry when man could have what lay before me.

Then, thinking of my friend, I chose the least rickety cab and the horse with the longest feather in its halter, and clattered off over the cobbles along the road to Ana-Capri. Capri of all places has yielded least willingly to man, and the roads cling perilously to the rocks as if in fear that at any moment the island will shake its rocky shoulders and send them tumbling into the sea. Finally, the cab climbed the twisting road, rounded the rampart that separates Ana-Capri so exclusively from the other two-thirds of the island, and we drew up at the gate of Don Prospero's villa, " The Whim."

A quarter of an hour afterwards we were seated on his terrace, dinner spread before us—two bowls of spaghetti richly powdered with cheese, two bowls of salad dressed to perfection, bread and cheese and a flagon of Capri wine from his own vines. We ate almost in silence, then Don Prospero pushed back his chair, lit a wicked black cigar and surveyed me with a benevolent smile.

Don Prospero. Well, my friend, what brings you to this isolated spot ? I thought you were hard at work producing d'Annunzio's plays with the Duse.

Myself. The season was over ten days ago, and I returned to Rome to resume my teaching, but it all bored me so—trying to help people

who won't help themselves—that I have decided to give it up and start something quite different; but I first want your advice.

Don Prospero. I think it was your shrewd countryman, Oscar Wilde, who said that "all advice is useless and good advice is fatal." I quite agree with him and especially in your case, for whenever I have advised you in the past I have always noticed that you did exactly the opposite.

Myself. You exaggerate, my friend. I admit that on several occasions I have obeyed you ungraciously—that was due to my pride and youth; but this time I have come in all seriousness to discuss my prospects and to consult you about them. I have decided to give up teaching and become a theatrical producer. (I heaved out my chest and looked at him with pride.)

Don Prospero (with rather an amused smile). You English are funny people—you are always producing something! You produce a voice, you produce a play or you produce vegetables! There is no word in our language which corresponds to the way you use "production."

Myself (a little impatiently). I don't think the words matter much one way or the other. I dare say we mean the same thing.

Don Prospero. I don't agree with you. A word can often be misleading. To talk of producing a voice sometimes makes people

think one can bring out something which does not exist. As to the gentleman who is called a play producer in England, I have never understood the reason of his existence. A theatre should be in the power of a cultured despot. There may be division of labour, but there must be no division of mind.

I knew Don Prospero's ability as a controversialist too well to allow myself to be drawn into an argument. He had very fixed ideas about the theatre, and they were generally right. I confessed my intention of devoting myself to the operatic stage and my ambition to give an autumn season of opera in London in the hope of establishing all-the-year-round opera.

Don Prospero. I remember your mentioning this mad desire when we were last in Rome together, and I think I told you I had no faith in the project.

Myself. I can see no reason why London should not have a permanent opera season like continental cities. It has an enormous population and unlimited wealth.

Don Prospero. And yet the fact remains that London has never supported more than a short opera season during the summer months. England, of course, is rich enough to build opera houses in every one of her great commercial cities, but personally I don't think opera will ever be a popular form of entertainment in the British Isles. Their temperaments are not attuned to it.

Myself. But why not develop what you call their temperaments ?

Don Prospero. Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember, from time to time, that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught. Moreover, you cannot change the taste of a nation. In Italy and throughout the Continent opera is a national institution. It represents to the people what cricket, football and racing represent to England. The man in the street, the common labourer, will pay a portion of his small earnings to buy a seat and listen to his favourite melodies. He goes to the opera not to learn but to be amused, that is to say, in much the same spirit in which you English go to musical comedy.

Myself. Then you infer that the English are not a music-loving nation ?

Don Prospero. Not exactly. There are more concerts given in London in a month than the rest of the civilized world gives in a year. But opera in England is not an indigenous growth. You have scarcely any operatic composers of any genius, and very few operatic singers of talent.

Myself. That is not surprising if there is no institution or developing ground for young artists and composers.

Don Prospero (somewhat impatiently). I see no object in continuing this conversation until you have found a crazy mil-

lionaire who will place his banking account at your disposal.

Myself. As a matter of fact, I have found a rich man who, for personal reasons, is willing to back an autumn season of opera in London, and that is really why I have come to ask you whether you think I am capable of directing such an undertaking. (Pride and humility were mingled in my voice).

Don Prospero (somewhat hesitatingly). Your experience as a teacher of singing should be of valuable assistance in choosing singers, and the knowledge you have gained of the stage while with Duse, ought to help you in producing. But you will find opera infinitely more difficult than drama, and if you ever hope to make money out of it—you are certain to be disappointed. Who is your backer ?

Myself. His name is de Sanna.

Don Prospero. What! The director of the San Carlo Opera House of Naples ?

Myself. The same.

Don Prospero. He is a successful coal merchant and reputedly one of the wealthiest men in Naples. He backs the San Carlo Opera House as a sort of pastime and pays most of the losses out of his own pocket. But why on earth does he want to give opera in London ?

Myself. Cherchez la femme.

Don Prospero. The old story. What a pity ! I suppose she is a second-rate singer ! They are the only ones who ever get pushed.

In what way can I assist you? (His eyes twinkled and his nostrils quivered as though a whiff of theatre "scent" had been blown across the bay).

Myself. You have had years of experience in the operatic world, and I want to know if you will come to Naples and help me to select the artists who are likely to meet with success in London.

Don Prospero. My dear fellow, to prophesy the success of an artist in any country or on any stage is like backing racehorses or gambling on the stock exchange. But if you think I can help you, I will go with you to Naples.

My eagerness to begin the new task was so great that for once Capri was powerless to hold me, and we left for Naples the next afternoon. Don Prospero was one of the original box holders in the famous and beautiful San Carlo Opera House, and that evening took me to a performance of "La Bohème." La Bellincioni sang Mimi, and I shall never forget the impression the great artist made upon me. Here at least was a figure that did not make the consumptive Mimi look like a healthy cook. Her face was beautiful, her dark eyes full of dramatic expression, and, although the excellence of her voice was marred by a tremolo, her phrasing was so intelligent and her personality so sympathetic that one quickly forgot the vocal defect. As an actress, I think, with the exception of Mary Garden, she was the greatest I have ever seen on the lyric stage. I at once asked Don Prospero whether it would not be a good idea

to engage her for my proposed season. To my surprise he advised me not to do so, as Bellincioni had already appeared in London, where she was a complete failure. "It is useless to insist," he added; "the one thing that the English public will not support is a tremolo, and although Bellincioni is a great artist, she will never be liked by them."

I decided to take his advice, realizing my youth and inexperience as an operatic manager. After the performance we went behind the stage and I was introduced to the Bellincioni and other artists.

De Sanna then invited us to his office, where he and Don Prospero, who were old friends, began a voluble conversation in Neapolitan dialect that, as far as I could make out, was composed of vowel sounds and gestures. A friendly conversation between two Neapolitans gives an Englishman the impression that a violent quarrel is being waged. I grew quite alarmed, as in those days I did not know Italian sufficiently well to make any sense out of what they were saying. At the end of a quarter of an hour it was with considerable relief that I heard from Don Prospero that he had suggested a plan which would facilitate my proposed London season. De Sanna, who spoke very good English, assured me that he was delighted to have an opportunity of co-operating with me. He then explained that Don Prospero's plan was to transfer the entire chorus and orchestra of the San Carlo Opera House to London, and to make contracts as well with some of the most celebrated singers of Europe to sing the principal rôles.

I returned to Rome well pleased with my prospects

and filled with gratitude for this valuable assistance. Two days later I left for Lond on,and at once on arriving asked for an interview with Mr. Harry Higgins, who was then controlling the destinies of Covent Garden. I already knew him slightly, but had never done business with him before. By profession Higgins was a lawyer, and did not give me the impression that he knew much about music. He outlined the terms upon which he was willing to let Covent Garden, which Mr. Frank Rendal held on a sub-lease from the Grand Opera Syndicate. Mr. Rendal's main interest was, I believe, organizing fancy dress balls in the Theatre Royal, and the possibility of my opera season interfering with his entertainments had to be carefully considered. It took days and weeks of wrangling and arranging before the contract was finally ready, and there were many moments when it looked as though negotiations would fall through. At last I received a note from Higgins, stating that the agreement was ready, and I lost no time in signing it. Once I had secured Covent Garden, I felt it was all important to return to Milan and complete the engagement of the company.

The name of Caruso was already beginning to stir the operatic world, and as I had known him in the days when he was glad to sing for thirty francs a performance, I felt hopeful that he might be induced to join my company for the sake of an old friendship. I returned to Naples and suggested his name to de Sanna. I had imagined that with his influence he would have been able to bring some pressure to bear on the great tenor, but was disappointed. De Sanna agreed that it would be excellent if I could

make arrangements with him, but gave me the discomforting information that he was not on speaking terms with the tenor himself. It appeared that a lady to whom de Sanna was devoted was a sister of Caruso's first wife, the mother of his children. A family feud had separated the sisters, both of whom had voices. Caruso's wife had never had an opportunity of singing in public, while her sister had succeeded in making a second-rate career for herself. In some way, which I could not understand, Caruso blamed de Sanna for the ill-feeling that existed between the sisters. I had to face the fact that if Caruso discovered that de Sanna was interested in my opera season, he would refuse to come to London, but I was forced to take the risk. Early in September, 1904, I sent Caruso a letter, asking if I might come to see him. He answered at once, inviting me to stay at his villa in Florence. I accepted the invitation, and on September 9th arrived at Villa delle Panche.

Caruso, like many of the great singers, was a man of the people, and also a Neapolitan to a fault, possessing all the amiable qualities and amusing defects of that vivacious race. The kindness of his heart equalled the excellence of his voice and, in spite of his triumphs in opera, he remained quite unspoilt. He welcomed me in his usual hearty way, and no sooner had I arrived than he at once dragged me off on a tour of inspection. His pride in the magnificence of his surroundings was delightfully naïve, and he did not wait for one's impressions or remarks, taking it all for granted that you found everything in perfect taste.

It may be unfortunate, but it is nevertheless true, that singers, and especially Italian singers, often show an extraordinary lack of discrimination in furnishing and decorating their houses. This is probably due to a humble origin and want of education. When they are successful they make money rapidly and too easily, and in many respects resemble the parvenu, often indulging in superfluous display and blatant ostentation.

Caruso's villa was no exception to the rule. Externally it was a hideous modern pile, and the interior would have made an admirable background for a third-rate cinema. Modern furniture, covered with fiery plush, gilt trimmings, fringes, loops, porcelain souvenirs, in fact every conceivable kind of garniture had been gathered for the mansion. Caruso seemed particularly pleased with the decoration of a ball-room that had just been finished. On the ceiling were atrociously bad and elaborately painted portraits of himself in the costumes of various operatic rôles. It seemed curious that a man with so keen a sense of humour could not see the ridiculous side of these frescoes, for had he not possessed one of the most luscious and remarkable voices of the century, he would certainly have earned a reputation as a first-class caricaturist.

It may sound unkind to dwell on this lack of refinement in the great tenor, but I do so because it explains, I think, the occasional want of taste and dignity he showed when taking his curtain calls after a great artistic triumph. It may also impress upon young singers the important part early culture plays in the development of an artist. Jean de

Reszke was an admirable illustration of what I mean, and the note of good taste that distinguished his entire work was reflected in the surroundings of his private life.

When the inspection of the Villa delle Panche ended we were served with excellent platters of spaghetti alla Bolognese in the ornate sala da pranzo.

After the meal we retired to his study and I furtively sent out feelers as to whether he would like to sing in London. I started by saying that it was my ambition to make London the greatest operatic centre in the world, and that I hoped to obtain his co-operation in this worthy project.

Caruso (looking very much alarmed). I hope you are not going to ask me to back any opera scheme. I know too much about the cost of opera ever to invest a penny in it.

Myself. I have all the backing I need, thank you. I have also signed a contract with Covent Garden.

Caruso (looking much relieved). Then in what way do you want me to help ?

Myself. Well, of course, I want you to sing for me.

Caruso (looking very determined). Not for nothing, I hope ?

Myself (delighted to find that he would even consider singing for me at all). Of course not. I have brought my cheque book in my pocket. I hope for the sake of our old friendship you won't ask for too much money.

Caruso (who had remained silent for at least two minutes). Before I discuss terms with

you I must know more details about your season.

Myself (with a sinking heart). Please explain yourself, my dear friend.

Caruso. Well, to be quite frank, I have known you a good many years, but I never knew you to have any money!

Myself (trying to be calm). I thought you took no interest in the financial side?

Caruso. I certainly do when it is a question of being sure I shall be paid.

Myself (relieved). If that is your only anxiety, I can deposit any reasonable amount at your bank on the signing of the contract.

Caruso (his eyes brightening). That sounds all right. Now, who is in the company? Who is your conductor?

Myself. Maestro Campanini, a young conductor of great talent who has never been in London.

Caruso Good! Who are the tenors?

Myself. Anselmi, Vignas and de Lucia.

Caruso (who unlike other singers was always most generous to his colleagues). All first rate. Who are the baritones?

Myself. Amato, Ancona and Sammarco.

Caruso Splendid! Who are the women?

This was the question I most dreaded. As a result of my understanding with de Sanna, I had engaged Caruso's sister-in-law to sing the principal parts, but had I revealed the fact, the singer would have risen in wrath and all would have been finished where he was concerned; consequently I told him

that I had only secured Eva Tetrazzini as dramatic soprano. She was a sister of the famous coloratura, and, although less celebrated, was in many respects the finer artist of the two. I also mentioned the names of other famous prime donne who had promised me their support, and added that the question of women singers had not yet been entirely settled. He seemed satisfied, and after considerable delay and hesitation he gave me a letter agreeing to come to London and sing three times a week. The fee he accepted was relatively reasonable, especially in view of what I was destined to pay him in America many years later.

The evening passed agreeably. Caruso hummed a few Neapolitan songs and accompanied himself very badly on the piano. His singing was, of course, divine, and he interpreted his native songs better than any one else in the world. He was also an excellent raconteur, and I sat until the small hours of the morning listening to tales of his early experiences. The following day I left for London, and when Caruso came to the gate to say good-bye, he asked me anxiously whether it was true that the fogs in London were so thick that people lost their way. Although I was born in London on a November day, I was so anxious not to frighten him, that I swore I had never seen a fog in London.

I forget who said that the truth can wear a thousand masks, but he would have been amused at the expression on Caruso's face, when, three days after his arrival in London, he was hopelessly lost in a thick fog trying to find his way from the Savoy Hotel to Covent Garden. " Porco Madonna !" cried

GIACOMO PUCCINI

the tenor to a friend of mine, " if I find that little Enrico in his office, I will stick a knife in his back. He lied about the prima donna and he lied about the fogs. He is a big liar ! I hope he may live in a fog all the rest of his life !" But the dear kind-hearted fellow never gave me the slightest trouble about either—he forgave his sister-in-law, made it up with de Sanna and nearly forgave the fog.

Two weeks before my season began, and in accordance with arrangements I had made in Italy, Puccini arrived in London to superintend the rehearsals of " Manon Lescaut," the opera I had chosen to open with. I went to the station to meet the young composer. Giacomo's popularity was really only just beginning to spread in England. but music lovers were delighted to know of his visit to London. He received quite an ovation when the train arrived at Charing Cross, but, needless to say, the small assembly who welcomed him were composed exclusively of his own countrymen. I accompanied him to his hotel, and after dining quietly he asked me to take him to Covent Garden.

Before I went abroad it never occurred to me that the position of Covent Garden Opera House was one of the most ungainly and unimposing of any opera house in the world. (Even the Metropolitan of New York, which, heaven knows, is ugly enough, is located on a more important thoroughfare than our Theatre Royal). But as no one seemed to question the suitability of such an institution being placed between a police station and a vegetable market, I ceased to think about it until I had to explain to some surprised foreigner. Before commercia

interests inspired the elimination of the lower tier boxes, the interior of the theatre was agreeable and sympathetic, but nothing on earth could be more dreary and depressing than the black view of Bow Street police station from the entrance of what should be a temple of art. Puccini asked me if I could explain why Londoners had chosen such an unseemly site for their greatest theatre. He even asked me whether it was part of a deliberate scheme that a police station, vegetable market and opera house should be built within a few feet of each other. I told him I had no explanation to offer. He then asked me whether our opera was subsidised by the English Government, a question I answered, of course, in the negative.

"Are your King and Queen fond of music?" he inquired.

"I think they are," I replied. "You must have seen attractive pictures of Queen Alexandra in her gown as musical doctor, and King Edward is a constant visitor at the opera. I hope they will both attend our opening performance. Their presence would, of course, lend brilliance to the occasion."

"Do you charge extra when you know their Majesties are coming?" he asked.

"Certainly not!" I was quite horrified at the suggestion. "In London one only has to announce the fact that the King and Queen are coming to a concert or an opera for the music lovers to buy up every available seat."

As we walked down the black, narrow lane leading to the stage door, we heard the strains of the orchestra rehearsing "Bohème." When Puccini entered

the theatre the orchestra and artists gave him an enthusiastic welcome. He was by nature a modest and retiring man, but like most eminent musicians, quickly lost his temper if singers altered the time of his music. It happened that night Caruso was in one of his most jovial moods. He was rehearsing Rodolfo's famous aria in the first act and took some of the phrases too slowly to please Puccini, who, when the great tenor came to the words " Chi son ? Chi son ?" (Who am I ? Who am I ?) shouted out in an impatient voice " Sei un imbecille !" (You are a fool). Needless to say, everyone roared with laughter, in which the composer and tenor heartily joined.

Later in the third act the prima donna, whose corpulent figure and unimaginative interpretation had already got on Puccini's nerves, overdid Mimi's consumptive cough. " For Heaven's sake tell the woman that Mimi was not suffering from *whooping cough*," he said to me in Italian, a language that the singer fortunately did not understand.

After the rehearsal the prima donna asked me anxiously to translate the remarks that he had made about her performance in the third act. I told her that he thought her cough sounded a little too boisterous for a consumptive girl. Like most prime donne of her type, she was unable to realize the effect of her figure on the public, and in an irritating, unsympathetic speaking voice, said, " Tell the Maestro I have no intention of going into consumption to gratify him." One hundred and one incidents of this kind happened before preparations were complete.

On November 17th, 1904, I opened the season with a brilliant performance of " Manon Lescaut." The critics were unanimous in their praise and they dwelt at length on the unusual perfection of the ensemble work of the San Carlo Company.

After the performance I gave a supper in honour of Puccini. Everybody of note in the musical world was present. Caruso, in spite of his fatigue after his superb singing in " Manon Lescaut," entertained us with Neapolitan songs accompanied by Tosti. All the other artists followed suit and at one a.m. the walls of the Victoria Hall of the Savoy Hotel rang with the voices of some of the greatest singers in the world. The entire evening was a brilliant success. Everyone agreed that the autumn season of opera had been launched triumphantly. We had every reason to believe this new experiment would be adopted permanently by London. Needless to say, time proved the absurdity of our dream, and at the end of six weeks the attendance showed such a serious falling off that we decided to close.

Although my disappointment at the ultimate result was considerable, I was too young to be discouraged. After some thought I came to the conclusion that the Covent Garden Theatre was perhaps too big to fill all the year round, and suggested to a few friends the desirability of giving London a theatre of the same proportions as the Opera Comique of Paris. I first mentioned the idea to Baron Von André, whose wife is now Baroness Wedel Jalsburg. He was most enthusiastic and, being Austrian by birth, took a genuine interest in music. Lord Grimthorpe immediately offered me every assist-

ance, and these two loyal friends subscribed sufficient money to justify my trying the new experiment.

The first difficulty was to find a theatre suitable for the purpose. The so-called New Waldorf Theatre was then in the course of construction, and when I approached the American managers, Messrs. Sam and Lee Shubert, much to my surprise, they were eager to let it to me on the basis of what is known in theatrical parlance as "sharing terms." To a novice like myself, not having to guarantee any rent seemed such a satisfactory arrangement, that I did not look further ahead and accepted the offer. I did not, however, completely absorb the fact that the managers, with their usual altruistic generosity, were to take the first two or three hundred pounds of the week's receipts, and that I was only to get a share of the profits above a certain amount. I told my friends, with much pride, that I had secured a theatre without having to guarantee any fixed rent. I also proved my supreme ignorance of the London public by assuring my friends that the receipts of the performances that I had planned to give could never fall below a thousand pounds a week.

The agreement for leasing the New Waldorf Theatre was drawn up by Mr. Sam Shubert, the eldest of three brothers who controlled a number of theatres in the United States, and a shrewd, capable little man. Shortly after he had concluded arrangements with me he went to America and met the most terrible and tragic of deaths. He was burned to death in one of the sleeping cars of the Knickerbocker Limited, which was wrecked

between New York and Chicago while running at eighty miles an hour. His brother, Lee, was at the time overcome by the terrible news, but afterwards carried on the business that has flourished ever since.

I went to Milan to complete arrangements for my season of Opera Comique in London, and conceived the idea of alternating drama with opera. I chose the operas most suitable to a small theatre and endeavoured, as far as possible, to confine myself to the lighter works that had been so successful in Paris. I was able to persuade Duse to join in my scheme, and she agreed to my suggestion to present "Adrienne Lecouvreur" in dramatic form one night, and in opera the next night. We chose several other operas whose stories were based on dramas in which Duse had played the leading rôle. One of them was Maeterlinck's "Monna Vanna." Later I shall tell why I was prevented from giving this work. Emma Calvé promised to come to London and sing the rôles that Duse acted, Bonci, de Lucia and other celebrated singers were secured and altogether the season seemed to promise success.

The Grand Opera Syndicate, headed by Mr. Harry Higgins, was rather alarmed at the prospect of competition. My aim was not to be a rival of Covent Garden, but to co-operate with it by presenting operas which were absolutely unsuited to so big a theatre. After the termination of my previous autumn season, my relations with Higgins were far from cordial, and his attitude to my Waldorf undertaking was distinctly antagonistic.

Two weeks before my opening I had an exceptional opportunity of testing the importance of advertising in a theatrical enterprise. A friend of mine approached the editor of the *Daily Mail* and asked whether something could not be done to give special publicity to the artistic enterprise I had undertaken for London. He pointed out the obvious fact that this was not a commercial project, but that the people who had invested their money in it were doing so with the hope of establishing an institution that might be a valuable aid to the musical education of the nation. The *Daily Mail* agreed to boom my season, and the result was amazing. A few days after the paper had published a series of articles announcing the details of the coming season, applications for seats began to pour in from all parts of the British Isles. We were highly elated at this unforseen stroke of luck, and if the *Daily Mail* had continued its propaganda I really believe opera comique might have become an established institution in London. The fact that I was only charging ordinary theatre prices for my opera and, therefore bringing it within the financial reach of the masses, appealed to the democratic spirit of the paper and the editors did their best to inform the public of the advantage of encouraging our efforts.

This enraged our enemies, and shortly after the opening of the season I received a letter asking me to go to Carmelite House. I was ushered into the office of a charming man with white hair, whose name I have unfortunately forgotten. He had been most kind and helpful in giving publicity to every detail of the season that would interest the public. I saw

by his expression that something unusual had occurred. He asked me to be seated until Lord Northcliffe was ready to see me. In a short time the great journalist himself appeared in the doorway.

"Is this Henry Russell?" he asked, in a rather brisk voice.

"It is," I answered meekly, feeling for some unknown reason like a culprit. I was beckoned into his office.

"Young man," he said, looking at me with a curious expression in his eyes, "you have got me into trouble. During my absence the *Daily Mail* has been giving your opera season about ten times as much publicity as it has Covent Garden." I nodded and assured him that I appreciated it all greatly, but my words failed to make any impression on him, as far as I could see, and he continued in the same tone: "The reason I sent for you is because I think it is only fair to warn you that I have given orders to stop this booming at once." I suppose I must have turned very pale, as he added quickly: "I don't mean to say that you won't get the publicity to which you are entitled, but I don't want the *Daily Mail* to be mixed up in any operatic fighting."

I at once assured him that I had no intention of setting my company up as a rival to Covent Garden, and endeavoured to explain my object in initiating a London Opera Comique. My conversation obviously bored him, so I cut it as short as possible. There followed a pause; I felt myself incapable of speech, my mind being filled with gloomy foreboding.

"To tell you the truth," Lord Northcliffe broke out, "I don't understand much about opera and am not interested in its development. Covent Garden is an established institution here, and there is no reason why I should ignore it." I assured him that I understood his point of view, but that I was convinced that if opera was established in England at reasonable prices it would, in time, become as popular with the people as it was on the Continent. He waved this idea aside with a contemptuous gesture. "I am not at all sure that I agree with you about the desirability of familiarizing the English people with opera. As far as I can see, the nations that devote so much time to music are a good way behind us in matters of more importance and, if you want my frank opinion, I don't think you will ever make the British an opera-going people, and that is the main reason why I don't want the *Daily Mail* to take sides." I realised by the tone of his voice that I was dismissed, and rose to go. I thanked him for what his paper had done in the past and told him how much his publicity had, in my opinion, helped to fill the theatre. This remark obviously pleased him. "Yes, yes, advertising—that is the thing! Almost anything with any good in it will succeed if you advertise enough. I wish you luck, young man, but am sorry I can't help you any more. If your opera schemes don't succeed in London, try them in America. The Yankees are always ready for something new." I little thought that within six months I should have followed his advice.

During this short interview I felt that I had been

in the presence of a man of iron, but one tempered with exceptional intelligence and who harboured strong prejudices against things with which he had no sympathy. I never knew him well enough to judge whether he had the charm and unfailing good nature of Gordon Bennett but of all the great newspaper men I have ever met, I should certainly say Lord Northcliffe's personality was the most forceful, if not the most amiable.

My Waldorf season was only four days old when the *Daily Mail* withdrew its support. Before the end of the second week the falling off of the receipts was quite alarming. Even the great Duse was unable to draw more than half a house, and the sale of the seats for the opera nights fell to zero. I remember there was only twenty pounds for a performance of "Adrienne Lecouvreur" that cost me two hundred and fifty pounds for artists' fees alone.

Things went from bad to worse, and towards the fifth week of the season both the opera and drama were being played to empty houses. The only hope I had of awakening new interest in the London public was by presenting Maurice Maeterlinck's "Monna Vanna." It was one of Duse's greatest rôles, in which she had scored a triumph in Milan a few months before. Maeterlinck had promised to come to London for the first performance. I had secured the operatic rights of "Monna Vanna," and Mary Garden, who was at her best in this opera, was ready to come to London and take the part. Such a combination seemed to me to guarantee a revival in my waning season, but fate was against me. To my amazement, and to the surprise of all

concerned, the Censor prohibited the presentation of "Monna Vanna," raising objection to the famous line in which Vanna says: "Je suis nue sous mon manteau." (I am naked under my mantle.)

Seen through the telescope of time, the censor's attitude will, I think, appear ridiculous to the younger generation. To me, it was not only ridiculous but tragic! I felt like a man who had been hit below the belt. I resented the inconsistency and stupidity of a censorship which permitted all sorts of atrocious vulgarities to pass unchallenged at homes of so-called musical comedy, where girls were not only appearing before the public "naked under their mantles," but a great many of them were to be seen naked with scarcely any mantles at all.

It is not my intention to express any moral approval or disapproval of musical comedy and its doings, as this form of entertainment belongs to a sphere of theatrical activity which does not interest me. . . . I did my best and pulled every rope I could to quash the verdict of the Lord Chamberlain's office, but failed ignominiously. The puritans had been at work, and although, thank God! they were unable to destroy "Monna Vanna," they did, by means of their extraordinary prurience, prevent my presenting to the London public one of Maeterlinck's masterpieces.

By the end of June it became obvious that it was necessary to terminate my season. In order to carry out the programme I had announced to the public I was obliged, not only to lose the money of my friends, but also lost all I had saved from my teach-

ing. I had just enough left to pay my debts and provide the fares for the company's return to Milan. It is amusing to relate that the only material souvenir I have of my unsuccessful operatic experiment is a small gold plate, presented to me by the entire chorus, with an inscription expressing their gratitude for being allowed to return second class instead of third, which was all they were entitled to by their contracts.

My personal position was not amusing as I sat alone in my office signing cheques the day after the last performance. I had scarcely enough left to maintain my family for two months. Although I had no hesitation in asking my friends for financial help for an artistic scheme, I was horrified at the thought of having to borrow to keep body and soul together. To return to teaching was out of the question as far as I was concerned. There is a peculiar fascination in theatrical management, which only those who have experienced it can understand. In spite of the set back I had received, I felt instinctively that my theatrical career had not come to an end.

One of the singers who had taken part in the Waldorf experiment was Alice Nielsen, a young American with a pretty voice and an attractive stage presence. She had made a reputation in the United States that entitled her to be called " The Queen of Comic Opera." She had courageously abandoned this lucrative metier, in the hope of gaining recognition in more serious work, and made a favourable impression on the London public without in any way causing a sensation. The Shuberts were anxious to

get her back to America, as she was what is known in theatrical slang as "a money maker." The Shuberts knew she had signed a contract with me and that they could only get her for musical comedy with my permission. They were also aware of my aversion to this hybrid form of recreation, and for this reason asked me whether I knew of an opera which would be suitable to Alice's talent, and not too expensive to mount and cast. I proposed Rossini's masterpiece, "The Barber of Seville." This, they feared, would be too costly on account of the large cast it calls for. As a last hope I substituted Donizetti's "Don Pasquale," and they reluctantly accepted this charming little work.

They then offered me a contract for the United States, but the amount they agreed to pay was so small that I was obliged to engage the cheapest singers I could find in Italy, which, of course, meant that the company was both inexperienced and immature. When the contracts were completed I was informed that Mr. Flo Ziegfeld was to be a partner in the undertaking. I think that this was before he invented his now famous "Ziegfeld Follies." In after years I often heard him refer good-naturedly and humorously to the "Don Pasquale" contract as one of his earliest follies.

I accepted Shuberts' proposal to go to America, and thus ended my attempt to make London a great operatic centre. Oh! how the warnings of Don Prospero and Lord Northcliffe came back in my hours of discouragement and depression!

CHAPTER VII

AMERICA—TOURING WITH SAN CARLO COMPANY

THE controlling power of the theatrical world in New York was for many years entirely in the hands of two great trusts, the Shubert Brothers and Klaw and Erlanger. They became deadly rivals, and until lately had been constantly at war with one another. Finally, a truce was declared and, I believe, there is now a working agreement between them ; but as a result Marc Klaw broke partnership with Abe Erlanger.

It is extraordinary that two men of such opposite tastes and different types should ever have worked together, Klaw being a man of culture and distinction, who takes a genuine interest in the artistic side of the theatre, while Mr. Erlanger's corpulent figure and expensive jewellery are products of his shrewd commercial ability. Charles Dillingham has, I think, always retained his independence of either of the trusts, and ranks deservedly as one of America's most popular and attractive managers.

In September, 1905, three months after the termination of the Waldorf season, I sailed for America, arriving in New York with the proverbial half-crown in my pocket. It was one of Shuberts' representatives who met me at the boat, and, much to my relief, without asking me whether I needed

them or not, pulled out a bundle of " green backs." I gladly accepted the proffered loan and allowed myself to be driven off to the Knickerbocker Hotel. The ill effects of a rough passage made it impossible for me to enjoy any of those amazing " first impressions," as I was lonely, distinctly unhappy, and regarded the New World with a jaundiced eye.

My first breakfast remains a vivid memory. I was confronted with a grape fruit the size of a small cart-wheel, steaming porridge and cream, fish-cakes, eggs, pancakes and syrup, and at least a gallon of coffee to wash it down—this at nine o'clock in the morning. Serious doubts arose in my mind as to the sensibilities of a nation who, so early in the day could master such a quantity of food. However, in a short time I realized that the very air of America is hungry and demands an extraordinary amount of vitality, and although I was never able to put away a five-course breakfast, I ate twice as much as I did in Europe.

Perhaps if I had begun the day as well fortified as my fellow workers and lunched, standing up, off a slice of pie and a cup of black coffee, I might have become a potentate in Wall Street. Americans appreciate good food quite as much as Europeans, I found, but to them nourishment is a subject to be taken with the utmost seriousness. They do not bring to their tables their lighter and more buoyant selves, as do the continentals, who regard eating as a pleasant diversion. Perhaps it is the absence of stimulants that make them so often appear lugubrious; for even in the days of which I speak people drank generally before and not during a meal.

A body by itself cannot both think and digest without outside aid. Americans should realize that this is one of the secrets of what may be called the gracious art of dining.

But to return to that first breakfast and the noisy dining-room, that seemed to move up and down with the same nauseating insistence as the boat I had just left. Sam Kingston, Shuberts' white-haired and good-looking assistant, tried to be sympathetic, but was obviously so amused at my bewilderment, and what he called my English drawl, that he could not conceal his mirth. He proceeded to imitate me, but I failed to understand half he said, and was far too frightened to admit the fact. Pity overcame him at last, and he leant across the table in the most kindly way. "Say, Russell, I guess you are up against it now. Don't get cold feet. Though New York can be pretty tough on strangers—you'll soon be O.K."

I admit that I was stupid, but this sentiment conveyed absolutely nothing to my mind. American phrases had not at that time percolated into England. I failed to understand what I was up against and why I should "get cold feet" on a hot day; and as to soon becoming "O.K.," apart from the fact that I had heard of Otto Kahn, the letters conveyed nothing.

After a few days in New York my ears became accustomed to the new intonation, and gradually, as I mastered the language, I realized the force and value of "slang," which seemed the chief medium of expression.

The old Casino Theatre, where the first perfor-

mance of "Don Pasquale" was to take place, I found a most unattractive building, and two weeks after my arrival rehearsals began. The orchestra was not adequate in any sense, and only a quarter the size required for Donizetti's music, which, Heaven knows, is simple enough. I felt certain that failure was in store for our production, and I was not mistaken. The opening was disastrous, the critics merciless, but fair. Now I realize how ridiculous and almost impertinent it was to expect New Yorkers to accept such a ragged performance, for they have always demanded the best and do not tolerate the second-rate.

As I see it now the Shuberts must have anticipated that so inferior a production would be doomed in a city like New York, and suspect that they hoped, with this for an initial experience, Alice Nielsen and I would no longer scorn the lucrative musical comedy.

But Alice had too much Irish blood in her veins to accept defeat without a struggle and, in spite of many flattering offers, was determined to show America that she would not be beaten. So poor "Don Pasquale" was unceremoniously put out of New York and sent on the road on what is known as "one night stands."

"One night stands" in America over twenty years ago were not exactly an amusing way of gaining one's livelihood. Distances were appalling, the hotels were filthy and the food was uneatable. Visitors from abroad were rare birds and the idea that they should be pampered had only developed on the fringes of the country. We were regarded as "greenhorns," and our party, which consisted

mostly of Latins, was often treated with contempt by suspicious hotel keepers, who considered us " a heap of good-for-nothing peanut-eating dagos who chattered like monkeys in a cage."

We often travelled from town to town without sleeping in a bed for six or seven nights. After a performance we would hurry off to a railway station in a broken-down carriage drawn by two wretched horses that continually slipped on the ice-covered roads, only to find that a snowstorm had delayed our train for several hours. The waiting-rooms of the small towns of the Middle West were scarcely as comfortable as cattle sheds in England, but anything was better than exposing ourselves to the wind-driven snow. So we carried our own suit cases (as often there were no porters in the railway stations) and had to pick our weary way through sleeping negroes to find a corner where we could huddle together until the arrival of the train.

I remember once as we journeyed through the Middle West, arriving early in the morning at a town called Meridian, in Kansas. We were advertised to perform that night, and anxious to make up for several hours delay. As the train crept slowly into the station we saw what might have been a scene from the day of judgment—houses torn in half, trees uprooted, pavements twisted and dazed inhabitants frantically poking about among the ruins.

" Guess it ain't no good unpacking that there scenery to-day, Governor," a rough looking person called out as I walked towards the van; "you won't be able to give no darn show in this town, there ain't a brick house left standing."

The chaos, we discovered, was the result of a cyclone that had come whirling from the prairie with such terrific force that buildings in a thoroughfare as long and broad as Regent Street had been completely destroyed.

Fortunately for us a few houses built on a hill outside the town were still intact. One of them was occupied by a lover of music, who, hearing of our plight, offered us refuge.

After every variety of trial and tribulation we arrived in Denver, that strange city sprung up in the mountains of Colorado—an extraordinary conglomeration of wonderful new houses and primitive shacks, these the signs of vast wealth, wrested suddenly from the surrounding hills. A city of great contrast, both physical and human ; a city of pride, confidence and amazing vitality ; where riches were made almost over-night, and lost sometimes as quickly ; where the gambler, the miner and the western business man rubbed shoulders ; a city that with a superb gesture and a large indifference as to the cost called on the ends of the earth for what it wanted. Never have I seen a place more typical of what I take to be the American characteristics of impatience, affluence, generosity, youthfulness and unquestioning confidence in the future.

Here at last we found a good hotel. The first evening I was sitting alone in the dining-room, immersed in gloom, thinking of the old days of luxury in Curzon Street, of Tosti and the scintillating group I had left in London—and for what ?—when suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder.

" Hen, what the devil are you doing here ?"

Could I be dreaming ? No, it was not a vision, but actually my old friend Grimthorpe. His surprise was almost as great as mine, and the excitement of finding ourselves together in the wilderness reduced us to a state of incoherency. Finally I gathered that he had been taking a cure for rheumatism, and was on his way back to New York. I outlined my past adventures and the programme I had undertaken for the next few months. The idea of my shepherding such a company through the wilds of the West so intrigued and amused him that he decided to change his plans and to accompany us as far as the coast.

The fact that a member of the House of Lords was travelling in an ordinary day coach with a small Italian opera company gave the reporters of the prairie towns unlimited scope, which they used to their own ends, indirectly benefitting us. Not the presence of the greatest singer in the world could have lent us more publicity, and thanks to this our progress became triumphant.

When we arrived in Redlands, California, Grimthorpe was so delighted with the country that he suggested a walking tour by slow stages to Los Angeles. One evening, as we sat discussing plans, a letter was handed him, The contents suddenly transformed him into a tower of rage. " Damn the American newspapers," he said, " and damn you and your Italian company, too, and damn the vulgar publicity of this country ! Here's a letter from my dearest friend, threatening never to speak to me again because some ass of a reporter cabled the London newspapers that I had eloped with your prima

donna!" Although he was really furious, his sense of humour conquered, and soon we were both able to laugh at the situation. Years after, he told me that the incident had caused him considerable pain, as the lady refused to believe that his only motive for joining our little company had been his friendship for me. Grimthorpe and I had to part in Los Angeles, as he was going to San Francisco, while I was returning to the East. His last words gave me the encouragement and confidence so badly needed. He seemed convinced that there were great operatic possibilities for me in America, and that I would succeed in producing something worth while on a large scale. This was all very kind, but I had not told him of the loss of my capital during the Waldorf season. I confessed this, also the fact that I knew no one well enough in America to ask for backing. He waved it all aside, begged me to go ahead and find a suitable theatre in an important city where opera could be given, and moreover to count on him for a substantial sum. Considering how generous he had been in helping my London experiment, it was delightful to find that he was willing to assist me again.

From California I took the Company back across the continent to New Orleans. Soon after my arrival I was introduced to several of the principal box-holders of the famous French Opera House, which has since been destroyed by fire. They were anxious to revive the glories of their operatic past, and said that if I could find enough backing to bring a good company to New Orleans the following winter, they would guarantee a good subscription for the season. Here was, indeed, an opening I had

not expected, and, remembering the generous offer of Grimthorpe, I signed a contract with them for the following year.

At the end of May I returned to Paris and at once got into touch with Grimthorpe, who was then President of the Travellers' Club. He invited me to dine with him at the Château de Madrid. Our conversation drifted from subject to subject, and I noticed that it lacked the lighter touch and seasoning of amusing anecdotes which made him so delightful to listen to. Even the succulent dishes did not divert him—a sign that some dire misfortune must have occurred, as he was at all times the most enthusiastic of epicures. I never knew any one who bestowed more care on the preparation of a menu than he did, and he was as fine a judge of wine as any man who ever lived. My preference for ginger beer and lack of appreciation for champagne had always puzzled and sometimes annoyed him. Towards the end of dinner, and after a silence which had lasted too long to please me, he suddenly blurted out: "My dear Hen, you will be sorry to hear that I have lost a lot of money. After I left you in Los Angeles I went to San Francisco, where a friend of mine persuaded me to invest in a new scheme of surface cars. Just like my luck, the damned earthquake upset everything, and I am afraid my money is lost." He also told me something about his uncle's will being thrown into Chancery. I don't remember the details, but do remember him saying: "I am so hard up for the moment that I really don't know which way to turn, and until my lawyers have straightened out my affairs I shall not know where I am."

This coming from a man who, I believe, had once enjoyed one of the largest incomes in London, was a serious statement. It shocked me all the more because I knew how generous he had been to his friends. It is impossible to conceive a more trusting open-hearted and unselfish friend than Ernest Grimthorpe. Few people know how much he gave away. With him there was no ostentation or newspaper notoriety, and those who benefited by his generosity were mostly people who could never hope to return it.

After he had told me the conditions of his affairs he seemed to recover his usual good spirits. He even apologised for having given me, what he called, a rather dull evening. Changing the subject, almost brusquely he said, "Now tell me all your news. What did you do after we parted in Los Angeles? Did you find any opportunity of giving opera in America?" I felt loath to tell him, knowing that he was no longer in a position to provide the financial assistance promised a few months before; so I tried to avoid mentioning the contract made with the New Orleans Opera House. He seemed to guess what was in my mind, however, and insisted on knowing the truth.

"Listen," he said, almost impatiently, "I have never broken a promise in my life, and I am not going to begin now. If you can wait a couple of months I will let you have the amount I promised. So you can go ahead with your arrangements as though nothing had happened. I will see that you have all the money you need."

I assured him that I would be able to manage

without his assistance, and left him that night with the determination to find other backing. Of course, it was no easy matter, as people in Paris were not willing to invest money in an artistic enterprise in New Orleans, and I was about to abandon the whole project when I received a cheque from Grimthorpe for the amount he had guaranteed me in Los Angeles. I was quite overcome by this extraordinary proof of friendship, and, holding the cheque in my hand, I realised it was not without reason that the entire world had come to believe in the word of an Englishman.

It is impossible to describe my joy at the prospect of again entering the operatic field ; and once more I found myself in the Galleria of Milan, engaging the best singers I could find for the New Orleans opera season. It is unnecessary to enter into details. Although I secured many well-known artists for my company, there was only one of really international fame. This was Lillian Nordica. Her name awakens in me memories of affection, esteem and gratitude. She was not only a great singer and one of the finest exponents of Wagner, but a delightful woman, a loyal and sweet companion. I had given her lessons in London years before I ever thought she would sing under my direction. The moment she heard that I had been asked to re-organize the New Orleans Opera House she offered to sing for me on very reasonable terms.

I arrived in New Orleans in October, 1906, and found at once an atmosphere so suggestive of the continent, and so sympathetic, that I felt that here I would find the longed-for response. One of my

first impressions was the strangeness of having to walk up, instead of down, to the river, where I watched the ships gliding between high banks, their decks well above the level of the streets. The long avenues of houses closely shuttered from morning until evening; the French restaurants tucked away in odd corners with their delicious food; the slow, smooth speech of the people, their olive skins and dark hair—all were an extraordinary contrast to the rugged and primitive parts of the America that I had seen the year before.

I found the residents most congenial and interesting. Many were the descendants of French emigrés and aristocratic planters, their ancestry showing in the poise and deliberate carriage that proclaimed them a different breed from the active Northerners, who, not afraid of a mid-day sun, were eternally busy.

I discovered that the New Orleans meaning of "Creole" was "the native born child of foreign-born parents," and that it did not imply a mixture of African blood. Nothing could be more spontaneous than the hospitality of New Orleans, and I was royally entertained by my friends during my three months' sojourn. Among them were Mr. and Mrs. Harry Howard, at whose home I spent some of my happiest hours, Mrs. Yznaga—the mother of Consuelo, Duchess of Manchester, Lady Lister-Kaye and Miss Emily Yznaga—one of the most distinguished and charming Southerners I met. Her intelligence and vitality were quite extraordinary for a woman of her age. I knew her three daughters quite well, and this so delighted her that I was

bombarded with questions about them. The chief topic of conversation was always her "girls," as she called them.

The season in New Orleans was a great success from an artistic, but not from a financial, standpoint, and though at the end there was a deficit for which I was liable, I managed to scrape enough money together to take my company to the North West and California. This time I engaged a business manager, Nat Roth, an excellent, good-natured fellow, who did his best to keep us out of difficulties. On one occasion when we were in financial straits after a disastrous week in Chicago, he succeeded in interesting Jo Ulman, who, much to his own astonishment, suddenly found himself a supporter of grand opera.

It was necessary to find a name for the company, and, as I did not care to use my own, I called it the "San Carlo Opera Company." Again I set out and toured the United States from coast to coast. This time we found conditions less primitive, but tragic and amusing adventures befell us as before.

I remember an incident at El Paso, Texas, where we gave the "Barber of Seville." The house was packed, and after the last act the applause was sincerely enthusiastic. It is a long opera, and, as is the custom, we cut certain parts of the last act. Unfortunately for me, a group of pedantic and earnest students followed every note of the performance with scores, and when finally the curtain fell, to my amazement, they began shouting that the opera had not been given in full. The rougher element in the theatre, without in the least understanding the situation, and glad of the excuse to

make a row, so affected the audience that everyone in the house clamoured that their money must be refunded. The sheriff of the town was sent for, and I found myself surrounded by Texas gunmen, who refused to let me or the company leave the town until every penny of the receipts were given up. The conduct of the people was outrageous and, I believe, without precedent. Had I been in a position to wait in Texas to bring the matter before the court, I should have demanded justice. The public knew this, and took advantage of the fact that our special train had to proceed to Houston the same night.

I had another hair-raising experience in Portland, Oregon. After the completion of a week's successful engagements we left San Francisco in the evening and were due to open the following night in Portland. When we were within six hours of our destination the "diner" of our train was derailed. It took eight hours to make the necessary repairs, and instead of arriving in Portland at mid-day, we arrived at a quarter to eight in the evening. A performance had been announced of "La Gioconda," with Nordica in the principal rôle. The house was sold out, and when our train pulled into the station I saw the local manager pacing the platform, consternation written in every line of his angular body.

The situation for me was extremely serious. If I failed to give the performance the money in the box office would have to be returned. This meant bankruptcy, as I had not sufficient reserve funds to pay the fares of two hundred people from Portland to our next stop. There was not a moment to be

lost! The artists were rushed to the theatre and the scenery and orchestral instruments unloaded. I changed into evening clothes and told the manager that at a quarter past eight I would appear before the curtain and make a speech. From a quarter past eight until five minutes to nine, I told them imaginary stories of heroism, attributing to well-known singers acts of self-sacrifice and presence of mind, of which they would have been entirely incapable. I explained that when the dining-car was derailed people were thrown from their seats and badly cut by the broken crockery and that, notwithstanding the shock to their nerves and the various wounds they had sustained, the artists were at that moment dressing to keep their faith with the Portland public. I am almost ashamed when I think of the outburst of applause that greeted my last words. There was scarcely a word of truth in my dissertation; the train had been moving slowly when the accident occurred and no one had suffered the slightest injury; but during that terrible hour while waiting for the stage manager to give the signal I was in reality fighting for my existence, and I think the audience must have been affected by the pathos which was not altogether assumed. Not a person had left the theatre when, an hour and a half after the scheduled time, the curtain was rung up.

It has always amused me to mix with the crowds as they file out of a theatre. At Butte, Montana, we produced "La Bohème," and, as usual, the scenes laid in the Latin quarter of Paris were costumed in the more or less modern and shabby way that is

correct. The people of Butte had, however, expected to see grand opera artists decked in gems and flowing robes, the men with flashing armour, brandishing spears, and were bitterly disappointed at our efforts. "Poor devils, I suppose they're bust. Apparently they've sold their costumes!" I heard from every side.

After passing through various vicissitudes, the "San Carlo Opera Company" reached Boston the following May, where we gave several performances with extraordinary success.

Nordica introduced me to her husband, George Young, who was so impressed by what I had accomplished that he agreed to back my company the following year, and again I set sail for Europe, out of funds but buoyant with hope.

During a few months in Italy I discovered a number of new singers and returned to New York early the following September. I called at once on George Young, who was then head of the Windsor Trust. I needed money to go ahead with the preparations for the forth-coming winter. Imagine my surprise when I went to the office of the Windsor Trust and was told by the manager that Mr. Young would be unable to see me. I assured him that there must be some mistake, as Mr. Young had been advised of my visit by Nordica. The manager remained quite unmoved, saying that he did not dare disturb Mr. Young, and that if I wanted to see him I would have to watch by his door until it opened.

For nearly eight hours I kept a vigil in that bank, growing more desperate with the conviction that something tragic had occurred. At eight p.m.

Young came out of his office haggard and unshaven I barred his way and said that I had brought messages from his wife, who was still in Europe. At first he scarcely recognised me, but after a moment's hesitation told me to get into his car, and we drove to his apartment at Sherry's. He did not speak until we entered his rooms, then he suddenly broke out: "Russell, I am broke! And by this time to-morrow richer men than I am will be broke too. The Knickerbocker Trust will close its doors in the morning. This will precipitate a financial panic. If you have any money in any bank in New York go at nine o'clock to-morrow morning and get it out. I can do nothing for you. Don't count on me for a cent. I am sorry, but I am broke."

I left him late that night, feeling as hopeless and depressed as it is possible for a man to feel. I had twenty-six artists and a chorus of fifty in New York waiting to be paid. They needed money to keep them from starvation. My entire capital at that time was twelve hundred dollars, which was deposited at the Lincoln Trust. I did not close my eyes that night and waited anxiously for the morning newspapers. Everything Young had prophesied came true. The Knickerbocker Trust failed for sixty million dollars, and Barnby, the President, blew out his brains. I arrived at the Lincoln Trust at nine o'clock in the morning and found a queue of hundreds of people as anxious as myself. After waiting hours I secured a few hundred dollars, a sum inadequate to meet the immediate needs of the company. What was to be done? I called on everybody I knew, including Mr. Perry Belmont,

who was most courteous to me, but quite unable to help. As he accompanied me to the doors of the bank, he pointed to a large gate leading to the safe deposit. "That's where people have locked up whatever available cash they have. They're all scared of banks now."

I went back to my hotel and divided the little money I had among those of the company who needed it most. In order to carry on I needed twenty thousand dollars within the next forty-eight hours. I searched and searched my brain for someone who might be willing to help, then suddenly thought of Eben D. Jordan, who had been so enthusiastic about my performances in Boston the year before, and who I knew was a generous patron of music. I put in a long distance call to his house but, to my bitter disappointment, the telephone was answered by the butler, who said Jordan was in Hot Springs, Virginia. I made up my mind, however, that he was my only hope, and, collecting the few remaining dollars I possessed, took the train that night to Hot Springs. It was a long journey, and when I arrived the next day I had scarcely enough courage to send in my card. An answer came back saying he would see me at two p.m., and after another three hours of suspense I was ushered into his presence.

He was a distinguished-looking man, a little blunt in manner, but his eyes had the kindest expression I have ever seen. His voice was deep and gruff, and by the way he spoke I gathered that my visit considerably surprised him.

"What the devil have you followed me to Hot-

Springs for?" was his greeting. This made me so nervous that I was rendered for a moment speechless, and it was some time before I had the courage to tell him the object of my visit. What I said or how I said it I shall never remember to my dying day, but within half an hour of the time I entered the room Jordan had handed me a certified cheque for twenty thousand dollars. I think Boston was the only city in the Unites States that passed through the financial panic unscathed.

At first I hardly grasped the meaning of the scrap of paper in my hand. Fate had once more thrown me a life-line as I was about to sink. Suddenly I remembered those eighty anxious people, and lost no time in wiring them the good news.

I returned to New York immediately and started rehearsing for my Trans-Continental tour.

CHAPTER VIII

BOSTON—BUILDING OF OPERA HOUSE

DURING the varied vicissitudes of my career I have often noticed that the more heartily I cursed the fates and called upon the gods to witness their injustice, the more frequently I was subsequently forced to admit that their acts were infinitely wiser, kinder, and more generous than I could ever have contemplated.

Little did I realize that the ultimate outcome of my visit to Hot Springs that terrible day would be the building of one of the finest, if not the finest, opera houses in America, and my appointment as managing director.

Six weeks later I met Jordan in Boston. He so thoroughly enjoyed and approved of the performances of the "San Carlo Company," that at the end of our season he announced that he seriously considered building an opera house in Boston.

Not many weeks passed before a committee of many of the most prominent citizens had been formed and box-holders secured. My friend Frederick Converse was made vice-president of the company. He was a delightful man, a talented composer, and so enthusiastic about the new project that he worked unceasingly until sufficient support had been promised to Jordan. The response was

immediate. The American business man is accused of having no hobbies and of living entirely in his work. This I have found to be true. The successful man does not indulge in frivolous pastimes, nor is he a devotee of sport; petty acts of charity bore him, and he would rather give five thousand dollars than fifty dollars to a cause. At heart he is a romantic adventurer, and if an artistic enterprise is big enough to appeal to his imagination he will support it generously and expect neither reward nor kudos. It is the private enterprise of such men that, in spite of official indifference, has made possible institutions like the Metropolitan Museum, the great orchestras, opera houses, libraries, etc.

Eben Jordan will always live in my memory as a man of many parts, with an autocratic bearing which was strangely at variance with what I can only call an extraordinary and natural humility. He inherited vast wealth from his father, who was founder of Jordan, Marsh and Co., a company that is to Boston much what Whiteleys is to London. All avenues were thus open to the son, and it is a fortunate thing for the opera lover that a devotion to music formed the controlling passion of his life. He brought to it a certain intensity, shown in daily visits to me when the Opera House had been built—visits that were always announced by a knock on my door, and never did he use the slightest display of authority. He treated me, in fact, with much more deference than one receives from an office boy.

It was also remarkable that this man, who in turn was hearty, gruff and sometimes apparently intolerant, used no fraction of his great influence to

change the slightest detail of procedure or put forward the claim of any friend or member of the staff. He trusted completely and upheld me in every way possible.

What one may call his un-snobbishness was illustrated one summer in Paris, when his daughter Dorothy, who danced charmingly, was invited to give a performance before a group of notables at a reception given by Madame Stern, of whose salon I speak elsewhere. Jordan in his bluff way declined the invitation. When pressed for his reason he said that he was but a plain American and had no desire to mix with royalty. It was only to please the daughter, whom he adored, that he finally accepted.

This was the same Jordan who, after a trying week at the Opera House, arranged that char-a-banc loads of tired chorus girls had a day in the country. But the plain American stipulated that his name should not appear in the matter.

The site chosen for the new building was on Huntington Avenue, a broad, important thoroughfare in the most spacious part of the city. Mr. Parkman Haven, the well-known architect, made the designs, giving to the façades as well as to the interior strength, dignity and grace. The greatest interest was taken in the construction by the people at large, and subscriptions poured in for the lists, which were afterwards placed in the corner stone. The bronze casket contained, besides the names of subscribers, phonograph records of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and a selection of songs sung by the most famous singers of the day. The press were unanimous in their support, and Mr. Philip Hale of

the "Boston Herald" was, at all times, especially generous and enthusiastic in praise of the enterprise from its birth.

The foundation stone was laid December 1st, 1908, by Eben D. Jordan. His Excellency Governor Curtis Guild made an eloquent speech on the significance and inspiration of the new building to the enthusiastic crowds gathered for the ceremony.

There were many distinguished Bostonians present, among them Mrs. John L. Gardner, Robert Jordan, John Shepard, Signor Conti, Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Goodrich, Mrs. Hall McAllister and Genera Francis Peabody. I was asked to read telegrams of congratulation from Geraldine Farrar, Emma Eames, Andreas Dippel, Caruso, Scotti and many others.

The Opera House has a seating capacity of two thousand seven hundred and fifty people, including the eighty-four boxes. The foyers, staircases and the interior decorations are all in excellent taste and of subdued magnificence. The stage was at that time without doubt one of the most perfectly equipped in the world, with one hundred and thirty feet of vertical space for the upward and downward movement of scenery. When Beerbohm Tree was in Boston he assured me that he considered our stage, lighting and scenic effects as perfect as anything he had ever seen.

While the building was being completed I returned to Europe once more, to engage a company; to find conductors, ballet masters and stage managers to supplement the talent that had been found in America. When I was in Madrid a friend handed me a copy of the "New York Herald." On the front

page I saw a picture of the Boston Opera House and large head-lines stating it had been seriously damaged by dynamite. The cable reports said that there had been a conspiracy among the strikers to destroy the new building, and that a wall built of granite blocks had been hurled into the air, partly destroying the roof. I cabled at once to Jordan for full information and was relieved to hear that the damage was less serious than was first anticipated. I was assured that everything would be done to complete the Opera House by the date originally fixed for its opening.

Tickets for the first performance were eagerly bought from speculators at unheard of prices by people from all parts of America. Ponchielli's "Gioconda," with Nordica in the rôle of the protagonist, was chosen for the opening. Geraldine Farrar, who had been born in the vicinity of Boston, considered that it was her right to appear as the first star, and it was my task to convince her that Nordica had two claims to her one—the first that she was a greater artist than Farrar, secondly that she had been a loyal friend in the days of my misfortune, and now the time had come to repay her. The production of "La Gioconda" was considered one of the finest seen in America, and the audience was wildly enthusiastic. The American critics were unanimous in their praise of the production, with the exception of, I believe, a reporter of a Hearst paper. Much interest was taken in the American chorus, which had been recruited, for the most part, from New England, the male voices being supplemented by Europeans.

I think few people when they go to the opera realize the responsibility that devolves on the director. The management of an opera house in any part of the world is always difficult, but, I think is more complicated in the United States than elsewhere. One of the reasons is that Americans insist, quite rightly, that every opera should be given in its original language. This custom has been followed at the Metropolitan for years, with but the one exception that I can recall of "Boris Goudoonouv" being sung in Italian. The opera, of course, suffered by the Italian interpretation and Italian words. Even the music lost part of its subtle charm, while the clear, ringing tone of the Levantine voices seemed to frighten away the mysticism that is embodied in all Russian art. The same is true of Wagner's "Meistersinger." No matter how great Toscanini's interpretation may be at La Scala, or how careful the execution is at the Paris Opera House, the "Meistersinger" loses its local colour and poetic atmosphere when not sung in German. Only a German artist can convey the grim humour of Beckmesser or the Gemut of Hans Sachs.

I have always been surprised that the French, who are so critical in matters concerning art and culture, do not demand that operas be sung in the language in which they were written. I recognise the difficulties French authorities would have in carrying out such a plan, but if the Ministre des Beaux-Arts would attend a performance of "Carmen" or "Manon" in Germany, sung and acted with Teutonic thoroughness, he might be induced to pass a law to protect French operas from the crude

hands of foreigners. Even if one could eliminate the guttural and hard sounds of the German language that mar the graceful music of works like "Carmen" and "Manon," often there would still remain the personality of Fraulein K. or Frau Z., who are apt to reduce French heroines to dull and dowdy housewives.

An opera given in the original language is always preferable, but the public does not realize that this necessitates the engagement of an entire French, Italian or German company. However optimistic we may be about the peace of the world, the fact remains that even a successful artistic alliance seems impossible between these three nations. Even before the war it required a great deal of diplomacy to persuade a French prima donna to sing with a German tenor. A famous interpreter of the rôle of "Carmen" who was engaged to sing with Caruso as Don José, came to me after the first rehearsal and said, "I refuse absolutely to sing 'Carmen,' unless you find me a French tenor. Caruso's French accent is so bad that he destroys all the poetry of my beautiful language. Italians only think about their voices; we French attach more importance to good pronunciation. Unless you find a French tenor, I won't sing."

From the moment I became director of the Boston Opera House it was my ambition to give the finest performances in the world, and, thanks to the co-operation of those who worked with me, I think I may say that we maintained a high standard of excellence. During the six years of my direction we never once disappointed the public. There were a few occasions when it seemed that postpone-

ment was unavoidable, but, fortunately, an eleventh hour miracle always saved the situation.

One of the narrowest escapes I ever had was when Felix Weingartner, the great German conductor, came from Vienna to conduct a special series of Wagnerian performances. He chose " Tristan " for his American debut, and I arranged with Nordica to sing Isolda. The rehearsal went splendidly and lasted until past midnight. The next morning at nine o'clock, Nordica's secretary telephoned to me that there was little or no hope of her singing that night. I rushed off to the hotel and found Nordica in bed. She was unable to utter a word, and the doctor who was there, told me she would probably not regain her voice for several days. Isoldas are rare in America, and I could think of no one capable of filling the rôle. Fortunately, I had a working agreement with the Metropolitan Opera House, by which we exchanged singers and productions according to mutual convenience. I at once telephoned to Gatti-Casazza, the able and courteous director of the Metropolitan, who was always ready to assist me in times of difficulty. I explained that Nordica was ill and my Opera House was sold out for the special performance of " Tristan," and that I could not give another opera. I begged him to suggest a substitute.

Gatti only had two artists who could sing Isolde, Fremstad and Gadski. The first was appearing that night at the Metropolitan and the second was in bed with a sprained ankle. Gatti generously offered to go and see Madame Gadski, and find out whether it would be possible for her to sing that

evening. It was then about eleven-thirty a.m. He told me it would take him half an hour to get to Gadski's house and back. At twelve o'clock I again rang him up, and to my relief was told that she had consented to appear on condition that an apology was made to the public to explain the limp caused by her sprained ankle. She caught the one-o'clock train from New York and was due in Boston at six p.m. I motored over to Weingartner and gave him the good news. Instead of sharing my joy he threw his hands into the air and said; "Mein Gott! It is useless! Gadski sings Isolde with Toscanini's cuts, which are quite different from mine." Again the situation looked hopeless, as, obviously, a difference of cuts would confuse the orchestra and the other artists; I sent at once for a "Tristan" score, made Felix pencil his own cuts, and this I sent by one of the second conductors to meet Madame Gadski's train at New London, a half-way station between New York and Boston. Unlike a great many singers, Gadski was fortunately a good musician, and, with aid, learnt the cuts in the two and a half hours journey to Boston. The performance was announced for seven thirty. My dear friend Weingartner was very nervous, but kindly disposed, courteous and considerate. While Madame Gadski was making up in her dressing-room he rehearsed the new cuts. The curtain rang up punctually and the public knew nothing of the tour de force which Madame Gadski had accomplished.

It would take long to tell half of my amusing experiences in the Boston Opera House. Incidents

crowd into my mind; one especially of my first production of "Pelléas and Mélisande."

I had taken to Paris the previous summer a specially constructed model of the stage of the Boston Opera House for the purpose of showing the scenery and the plan of the mise-en-scene to Debussy and Maeterlinck. The model, made by our head man in Boston, was considered so remarkable that the director of the Paris Opera House asked me whether I would allow it to be shown in the Exhibition of the Académie Nationale. I was charmed to do this, and finally presented the model to the French Institution, where it is to this day. Both Debussy and Maeterlinck were delighted with my plans for the production, and they expressed their approval in enthusiastic letters.

I persuaded Georgette Leblanc, known to the world as Mme. Maeterlinck, to accompany me to America, as I thought the first appearance of this artist in the States would arouse considerable interest.

The week before the presentation of "Pelléas and Mélisande," the business manager announced that there was no advance sale of any kind, excluding the usual subscription seats, although the tickets for a performance of "Pagliacci" with Caruso, which was to take place two weeks later, were already sold out. This proved that the Bostonians were entirely apathetic about Debussy's masterpiece. Apart from my dread of giving a new opera to a half empty house, the cost of the production was so great that I feared the prospect of a heavy financial loss. Something had to be done! I determined to become my own press agent.

With Georgette's approval I informed the newspapers that I had received a cable from Maeterlinck saying he would arrive in Boston in time to be present on the opening night. I also admitted that before I left Europe he had wagered me one thousand dollars that he would land in New York without being discovered by the reporters. There was not a word of truth in this statement, as the poet at that time had no intention of coming to America or even going outside the four walls of his beloved garden in Nice. I cabled him saying I had invented my story for advertising purposes and that he was not to contradict anything I had said. The following notice appeared on the front page of the *New York Herald* the next day.

M. Maeterlinck Will Elude the American Interviewer

" At Least He Is Confident He Will Succeed, and has Wagered One Thousand Dollars

" M. Maeterlinck, author of ' Pelléas and Mélisande,' will leave for New York on the *Olympic*, if the steamship is ready on December 20th. M. Maeterlinck, who rejoices because, as he says, he has never been interviewed by newspaper correspondents in England or on the Continent, declares that he will enter the gateway of the Western world without being detected by the ubiquitous scribes of America.

" Will he enter New York disguised as a nobleman or in the steerage ?

" M. Maeterlinck is confident that only the

heaven-born genius of Arséne Lupin will be able to detect him. He is determined to reach Boston without being interviewed, in order to see his wife, Mme. Georgette Leblanc, who will star there in the drama that has made him famous, and afterwards appear in the opera of 'Pelléas and Mélisande,' so that she will be a heroine 'with and without music.'"

"Mr. Henry Russell, director of the Boston Grand Opera House, said yesterday, before he returned on the over-crowded *Lusitania*, that he had wagered one thousand dollars with M. Maeterlinck that he would be interviewed before he left New York for the 'hub.' 'S'death!' said Mr. Russell. But M. Maeterlinck is so confident that his disguise cannot be penetrated by the American newspaper correspondents that he has also wagered heavily with many of his Parisian friends that the sleuths of the press will only realize that he is in America when he makes his bow in the city of beans and blue stockings.

"Past Master of Disguise"

"'Tiens!' M. Maeterlinck declared to me,' said Mr. Russell, 'I will so disguise myself that no one, not even Homelock Shears, will be able to detect me. I am the past master of the disguise, but if I think the detectives of the press are on my trail, it is possible that I will travel in the steerage.'

"'I am sure,' said Mr. Russell, 'that M. Maeterlinck is capable of doing the maddest thing, but nevertheless and notwithstanding, I expect to win that thousand dollars.'"

The newspapers took up Maeterlinck's imaginary challenge with great zest, and tenders full of reporters watched the arrival of all the large liners. The discovery of an escaped criminal could not have caused more excitement than his supposed attempt to enter the Port of New York unrecognized. The publicity was enormous, and its reaction on the sale for our first performance was immediate. People clamoured for seats, not, alas! to see the opera, but in the hope of unmasking Maeterlinck's disguise.

This incident and others have forced me to agree with some of the remarks contained in a brilliant essay by that talented American writer, Mr. H. L. Mencken. Referring in an article which appeared in the *Smart Set* to the popularity of certain artists, he said; "But in every case it has been successful press-agenting, appealing frankly to childish weakness for the marvellous, that has primarily inflamed the vulgar. . . . The American's appetite for marvels is aroused by newspaper tales of opera house prodigies, deficits and amorous intrigues, and so he is led to make a compromise with his prejudices. He still holds to his doctrine that grand opera is all bosh, and is still reluctant to sit through it, even when the price is reduced; but he is curious to hear Caruso earn a thousand dollars at one miraculous laryngeal blast, and so his phonograph records begin to be sprinkled with high C's and he scrapes a far-away, unintelligent acquaintance with 'Celeste Aida,' the 'Pagliacci' prologue and the quartette in 'Rigoletto.'"

Perhaps times have changed since Mr. Mencken

wrote this article and since I gave "Pelléas" in Boston, but the fact remains that when Jordan died the Boston Opera House closed its doors. There remained only two operatic institutions of any importance in America, although there are one hundred cities in the United States wealthy enough to build opera houses and subsidise opera if they were so inclined. But this is a digression.

I carried out my press agent joke to the bitter end, and the night before "Pelléas," dressed up a chorus man and instructed him to take a taxi to the Lenox Hotel in Boston. Mr. Boomer, the musical, courteous and kindly proprietor, entered into the hoax, and as soon as the chorister had written his name in the visitor's book the local papers were informed that M. Maeterlinck had arrived. More reporters and more excitement ensued! They waited for hours in the lobby, hoping to see the poet come out, and their disappointment was great when they were told that the mysterious guest had vanished before the break of day. To this day a great many Bostonians are not sure whether Maeterlinck was or was not among the audience at that first night of "Pelléas."

The house was packed to suffocation and every man whose hair was a little longer than is usual or whose appearance was suggestive of the American conception of a poet had to undergo the disconcerting scrutiny of the curious crowd. I may be condemned for having resorted to such vulgar methods of publicity, but ignorance must be fought with its own weapons, and I considered that the public's flagrant indifference to the first performance of a

great work of art justified the trick which was, I admit, out of keeping with the dignity of my institution, and certainly not in harmony with my own personal feelings. This " stunt " had also its sequel. In America when two short operas are presented they are called a " double bill." Incredible as it may seem, at the termination of the fifth act of " Pelléas " I received a frantic call from the business manager. I found him speechless, while dozens of people banged outside his office. " Do you know what that noise is about ?" he cried. " It is people wanting their money back ! They thought ' Pelléas and Mélisande ' was a double bill like ' Pagliacci ' and ' Cavalleria,' and declare that they have been cheated."

Unfortunately the interest in " Pelléas " was quite dead by the time we reached the third performance, and instead of the five thousand dollars which we had on the opening night, the total receipts outside the subscriptions were two hundred dollars. One of the leaders of Boston society asked me in a tone of irritation why I insisted on giving an opera which neither interested the public nor drew money into the theatre. I offended her for life by answering that I gave the performance for the pleasure I personally derived from listening to a great work of art.

During one of my later seasons concert engagements brought Melba to Boston, where she was the guest of Mrs. Jack Gardner, the famous leader of Boston's élite. We had not been on speaking terms for several years, and I was much surprised when I received a message from the prima donna

through her hostess, intimating that she would like to sing at a few performances at the Opera House—but for the fact that I was director. Mrs. Gardner, who was a friend of mine, quite understood the situation, begged us to be friends for art's sake, or at least to renew diplomatic relations. I assured her that it mattered nothing to me whether Melba considered herself my friend or my enemy, and that I would be delighted if she would sing with my Company.

I assured her that the Boston Opera House was a public institution, built for the purpose of presenting the best in operatic art, and that personal feelings had no influence on my choice of artists.

The prima donna has always been known for her shrewd business acumen. I think, on that occasion, she realized that it was extremely profitable to be on friendly terms with a manager who could offer such tantalizing sums as 2,500 dollars for a single performance. Her capitulation may have also been due to the fact that Madame Alda, her compatriot, had married Gatti-Casazza. It was a curious coincidence that Alda never sang in a theatre where Melba had the controlling influence, and vice versa. Melba has never sung at the Metropolitan since her rival became the wife of the director. Alda though her voice was never as great as Melba's, is a better actress and has a finer musical intelligence. Her flashing dark eyes and beautiful teeth add to the charm of her handsome person.

Terms and other conditions were arranged through Mrs. Gardner, and one night Melba arrived at the Opera House and found herself in the anomalous

position of singing under the direction of a man to whom she did not speak. This warlike state of things did not last long. For the sake of the theatre, and not for any personal reason, I buried the hatchet.

Melba disappointed me only on one occasion and through no fault of her own. It was, as I remember, a matinée of "La Bohème." On the morning of the day of the performance I received a message asking me to go to her hotel. "Henry, I am afraid I shall not be able to sing 'La Bohème' this afternoon," she announced huskily as we met. I tried to cheer her up and told her that in order not to give the impression to the public that she and I had had a row it would be better for her to go to the theatre and try to get through the first act. I promised to have an understudy ready for the rest of the opera. She at once agreed to my proposal, and very courageously went to the theatre and dressed.

I returned to my rooms feeling rather nervous, and while trying to fortify myself with dinner received a telephone message from my secretary, asking me to go to the opera house at once, as Melba wanted to speak to me. I lived close by, and in two minutes was in Melba's dressing-room. I found her in tears. She tried to speak, and succeeded in saying in a hoarse whisper, "I can't utter a sound, my dear. You will have to put on my understudy." This took place fifteen minutes before the advertised time of the performance, and the house was packed. I told her that the only thing that would convince the public that she really meant to sing was to go before the curtain dressed in her Mimi costume and let me make an apology. This she did, and the public,

although disappointed, gave her a sympathetic reception. She held my arm while I explained, as best I could, her sudden loss of voice. As we came off the stage she assured me that this was the first time in her career she had ever disappointed an audience.

Among the many great artists who appeared under my direction at the Boston Opera House, Mary Garden was certainly the most fascinating. Her remarkable gifts of interpretation, her intelligence in all matters concerning the stage and her untiring devotion to her art made it a pleasure to have her in the theatre. The " Divine Mary," as she is called in America, possesses one of those magnetic personalities that charms as much off the stage as on it. She once said, in the early days when I was teaching her and she had only just begun her brilliant career at the Opera Comique, that : " The French people come more often to see me than to hear me." In a curious way she was right. Mary never had a really great voice—that is to say, had the same organ been in the throat of a stupid woman, it would have passed more or less unnoticed. But like Chaliapin, she converted an ordinary voice into an extraordinary instrument through which she expressed all the varieties of her moods and the subtleties of her art. The astonishing thing about her was the suppleness of her personality. Most singers have a tendency to become tedious by the repetition of certain tricks of acting and mannerisms. Consequently the ordinary prima donna often blurs the innocence of Marguerite with the guiltiness of Nedda, instead of making separate and distinct creations of the two

characters. Mary Garden completely loses herself in whatever rôle she plays, so that when she stands before us as Mélisande she is a timid girl of twenty, and, such is the magic of her art, every line of her face suggests youth and innocence. The next night as Thaïs, she conveys the vivid splendour of that courtesan's sensual charm; while as Salomé she obliterates all other memories and fills our hearts with horror as she embraces the trunkless head of Jokanaan.

Only once during the many times Garden sang for me was she unable to fulfil her engagement. This was in a performance of "Monna Vanna," a creation which may safely be classed as one of her best achievements. A sudden cold, resulting in complete loss of voice, made it impossible at the eleventh hour for her to sing. As "Monna Vanna" had never been given at the Metropolitan, I knew it was quite hopeless to appeal to Gatti-Casazza for aid. Fortunately, I had made it an iron principle always to have understudies in the Opera House, and I kept a register which contained the names of two understudies for every part, big and small, of every opera in the season's repertoire. I hastily turned over the leaves and found that the understudy of "Monna Vanna" was a lady named Madame Beriza. Although this artist was entirely unknown to the American public, she was sufficiently good to save the situation. But my momentary relief was quickly followed by the sharpest pangs of apprehension as I realized that Madame Beriza was the divorced wife of Muratore, the eminent French tenor, who had been engaged to sing Princevalle in "Monna Vanna"

that night. Unlike many divorcés, these two people were not on speaking terms. The situation was further complicated by the presence in Boston of the beautiful Lina Cavalieri, who had just become the second wife of Muratore. She was too much in love with her husband to witness with equanimity a passionate love scene between him and his former wife, and I was certain that if Lina knew that her predecessor and her husband were to sing together she would violently oppose the idea. As news of Garden's indisposition reached me late in the afternoon, nobody in the theatre, with the exception of my private secretary, knew anything about it, and the matter was kept a secret.

Not until Muratore was actually on the stage and had begun his part did he realize that the lady with whom he was to act his love scene was his former wife. When finally she entered his tent and sang the famous words: "Je viens comme vous l'avez voulu. . . " (I have come as you wished me to come) Muratore's face expressed such bewilderment and confusion that I could scarcely refrain from laughing. By a strange fatality he was obliged to exclaim: "C'est affreux!" (this is terrible). He stuttered, inaudibly, the words which should have preceded this exclamation, and with unnecessary emphasis shouted, "This is terrible!" Cavalieri in her usual place in a stage box, resplendently gowned and jewelled, turned ghastly pale and seemed to echo the words of the tenor, "C'est affreux." That night I was careful not to occupy my usual seat in the Opera House, and listened to the performance hidden away in a remote corner of the gallery. I

knew that the indignant tenor and the irate Cavalieri would, at the first opportunity, wreak their vengeance upon me, and my courage failing me, I left instructions with the stage manager to say indisposition had obliged me to retire early. Even under the most favourable circumstances singers rarely place the interests of their director before their own feelings, and in this case I knew that my desire to keep faith with the public would not have been accepted as a satisfactory explanation by either Muratore or his beautiful wife.

Once, I regret to say, the puritanical element of our audience was offended during a remarkable and superb performance of " La Tosca," given by Mary Garden and Vanni Marcoux. They handled the second act realistically, I admit, but not more so than is demanded by Sardou's lurid melodrama. Scarpia's effort to take advantage of Tosca was too vivid for the moral sensibilities of the Boston public. The next day we received a notification from the mayor of the city, requesting us to modify this exhibition of Scarpia's morbid desire. I informed the two singers of the mayor's protest, and opposed their suggestion to invite the mayor to act as stage manager and show them how the scene could be acted so that they might comply with his desires. It was not that I doubted his competence or questioned his experience in such matters, but I was afraid of creating a precedent. " La Tosca " was not one of the operas that usually attracted the largest audiences, but the unlimited publicity given by the newspapers to the mayor's report resulted in a packed house for the second performance.

From time to time we received invitations to give performances in towns such as New Haven and Providence. These improvised visits were often attended by exciting incidents. I had engaged a dramatic tenor whose name, I believe, was Albini. He was a second-rate singer, but the best I could find. When he signed with me he did not admit that he had already signed with Oscar Hammerstein, who promptly sued him. As he was about to go on the stage a policeman arrived with a writ. I begged him not to serve it until the end of the performance, and he acceded to my request on condition that he was allowed to remain on the stage to see that Albini did not escape. During a dramatic scene in which the tenor draws his sword and dashes across the stage the upholder of the law, thinking his charge about to run away, raced after him. The commotion caused in the theatre by the sudden appearance of a portly figure waving a baton and shouting in good plain American may be imagined, and it was some minutes before the audience subsided.

During a visit to the Chicago Auditorium smoke caused by a short circuit appeared in the orchestra pit. Suddenly a cry of "fire" was raised, and it was thanks to the presence of mind of the prima donna that a panic was averted. The iron curtain was instantly lowered, and instead of rushing off the stage like many of the other artists, she had the courage to stand in front of the iron curtain and sing "The Star Spangled Banner." This action quieted the fears of the audience and gave me time to explain to the people that there was no danger and no fire.

I had a Belgian stage manager, who entirely lost his head on that occasion. In the midst of the excitement he shouted to the tenor (who was a Spaniard) to tell the prima donna, who was closed up in her dressing-room awaiting her call, that the theatre was on fire. The Spaniard drew himself up with much dignity and answered, " I'm not on speaking terms with Madame Ria. Indeed, she is so jealous of my success that I don't mind if she *is* burnt alive !"

When the Boston and Chicago Opera Companies were first formed it was hoped that operatic institutions would spring up in many of the States. In order to establish mutual co-operation we elected Gatti-Casazza Advisory Director of the Boston Opera Company, and I was given the same honorary position with the Metropolitan Opera Company.

I made weekly visits to New York and kept constantly in touch with Mr. Otto H. Kahn, President of the Metropolitan Opera House, who was always ready to give money, time and advice for the furtherance of musical and dramatic art in America. It was in Paris, while engaging artists for my second operatic tour, that I was first introduced to Mr. Kahn. About that time Mr. Conried, once director of the Metropolitan Opera House, had been requested to retire. His downfall was due partly to the earthquake in San Francisco and partly to Caruso's expedition to the Monkey House. It is interesting to note, by the way, how frail is the ship and how fickle the fortune of an operatic impresario.

My name had been given to Otto Kahn by a prominent newspaper proprietor as a possible successor to Mr. Conried. I was young, ambitious and enthu-

siastic, and the Metropolitan Opera House appealed to me as an institution of unlimited possibilities. It is easy to imagine, with what hopes and aspirations I repaired to Mr. Kahn's residence near La Place des Etats Unis. With that punctuality and courtesy characteristic of the man he received me at once. The interview was short, but to the point.

A square, handsome face—extraordinarily un-Jewish in cast—curious grey-brown eyes, a youthful figure of medium height—perfectly dressed—a manner reserved, unostentatious, embodying cordiality and authority—the iron hand within the velvet glove—pleasant of speech, often bluntly frank—always non-committal—more interested in cause than effect—a delightful companion, generously inspiring to the ambitious—a knowledge of human nature making him heedless of gratitude and unwilling to meddle with destinies—lover of music—connoisseur of the rare and beautiful—keen sportsman—this is Otto Kahn as I know him. There is Kahn the writer, the epicure, the host, the courteous correspondent and the devoted friend.

But how differently was I affected by the other Kahn, the financier, the capitalist, and the banker. The mere sound of these terrifying words affects me with the same feeling of chilly isolation that I have when I see Kahn in his " down-town " office.

As I look back over the years Kahn's appearance has changed but little. His hair is somewhat thinner and tinged with grey, the lines round the mouth are deeper, but the expression remains as enigmatical as it ever was.

I was always conscious of a species of creeping

paralysis when Kahn summoned me to Kuhn, Loeb and Company to discuss operatic affairs. Life within those austere walls seemed immobile. Every detail was regulated after an unchangeable pattern. Even Kahn's partners and employees were not immune from the spell ; all were cold, set and formal. To talk art in such an environment seemed monstrous, and it is amazing how Kahn's love of beauty has survived it all. The outstanding difference between him and his colleagues has been that they allowed money to be their master ; he made it his slave.

On the rare occasions when I saw him at the bank I could almost hear the ticking of his watch as it marked off every minute of his day. With him punctuality became the thief of time, and when one's interview was over one left him having said the contrary of what one meant to say, or having said nothing at all, which he preferred.

Knowing my aversion to appointments at the bank, he would often invite me to lunch at his club. The hour fixed was always one o'clock precisely. Like the special elevator that whisked us up the forty stories to the Banker's Club, Kahn would glide smoothly, quickly and noiselessly into the restaurant. Nodding here and nodding there, avoiding bores, saluting friends, yet never losing one word of the subject of our conversation, he would give his views with frankness and decision. The simple meal ended, a good cigar and a curt " good-bye " brought our interview to an end with a rapidity which would have staggered any Frenchman.

But even at these lunches Kahn was not the

Kahn I really liked. He was still the banker, the financier and the man who carried his heart in his brain. At home he became a different person ; and all these icy attributes melted away. It was the instinct of the father which now took the upper hand, and he joined his children in their games as if he were one of them. They untied his tie, they ruffled his hair, pulled off his coat and made him look entirely disreputable. It was a Sunday afternoon at Lady Essex's country house outside London, where I had motored with Lord Grimthorpe. We arrived unexpectedly. Grimthorpe was anxious to consult Kahn about the Travellers' Club in Paris. After sending in our names we were shown into a large drawing-room. In the centre of the floor sat Kahn, surrounded by toys and children. We apologised for interrupting the game. Kahn made one or two entirely unsuccessful efforts to get up from the floor, but his three vigorous children held him a willing prisoner. " Oh," said Kahn, smiling and enjoying the situation, " you are not interrupting the games ; but this afternoon I belong entirely to the children. Do have some tea."

Mrs. Kahn, always a charming hostess, showed us every consideration, but Kahn himself proved to be more unapproachable when romping with his children than when locked up at a board meeting. Lord Grimthorpe made one or two futile efforts to open a conversation about the Travellers' Club, but each time Kahn endeavoured to answer him his mouth was covered by six tiny hands and our voices were drowned by children's laughter. Grimthorpe, who was rather quick-tempered and did not like children,

rose to go. He thanked Mrs. Kahn, whose conversation had particularly interested him, and waved to Kahn, saying with a touch of sarcasm in his voice, "The next time we meet I hope you won't be quite so busy." I thoroughly enjoyed the situation and the fact that Grimthorpe kept on muttering to himself all the way home: "Damn those squealing children."

The winter of 1907 was, from an operatic point of view, a stormy one. The direction of the Metropolitan Opera House had been confided to three people—the great Toscanini, Gatti-Casazza and Dippel. This triple alliance did not meet with Kahn's entire approval; but for reasons which would take too long to explain here he temporarily accepted it.

Trouble soon arose between the three heads of the Metropolitan, and I was not surprised when Mr. Dippel succeeded in persuading several of the most prominent singers to sign a manifesto threatening their resignation unless he himself was retained as manager. Kahn was not the sort of man to stand for any blackmail, and he dealt quickly and firmly with the situation. Dippel was vanquished, the singers, mostly fairweather friends, adjusted their loyalty to suit their pocket books, and the New York operatic season (which might easily have collapsed) was saved by Kahn's diplomacy, sang froid and perfect fairness.

There can be no doubt whatsoever that New York owes its present importance as an operatic centre to Kahn's genius for organization. I say this without in any way underrating the vital part which Mr. Gatti-Casazza plays in the direction of the Metro-

politan. He is too well-known as an administrator, a man of high integrity and great ability, to need any comment of mine. He, himself, however, admits how much he has been assisted by the loyal support and cordial co-operation given him on all occasions by Otto Kahn. When the latter was called upon to pay his share of the large deficit that resulted from the operatic chaos of a dual direction he did so without a murmur. The recollection of past follies is a feather in the cap of wisdom, and Kahn at once arranged that Mr. Gatti-Casazza should have absolute control, recognising that no opera house can be run successfully in any other way.

Kahn knew when to leave well alone, and it is safe to say that, had his example been followed in this respect, other American operatic institutions would have yielded more satisfactory results from every point of view.

Frank Harris, in a brief portrait of Otto Kahn, says: "In the United States there is no endowment of art or literature or science, nothing but business and material needs are taken into account by the Government. . . . The richest country in the world is the poorest in the endowing of art or letters or science.

"But if Kahn had been made Minister of Fine Arts. . . . What a revolution in the life and thought we should have witnessed! He would have founded opera houses and conservatoires of music in every city throughout the country; and, with opera houses, state theatres and schools of dramatic art!. . . . one brave wise spirit like Otto Kahn might transform America in a single generation."

Perhaps only those who are intimately acquainted with Kahn fully realize the truth of this statement. "A prophet is without honour in his own country," and it is a pity for the future of America that Kahn is not Minister of Fine Arts.

He had many bitter enemies; but so had, and have to this day, the great among men. Balzac, when accused of immorality, answered: "Whoever contributes a stone to the edifice of ideas, whoever proclaims an abuse, whoever sets his mark on an evil to be abolished, always passes for immoral." We have all heard Kahn mercilessly criticised; mostly, of course, by people who envy his power. For envy is the moving spirit of that secret but flourishing resistance made by mediocrity against any sort of individual eminence. I really believe that, were he so inclined, Kahn could buy up fifty per cent. of his adversaries, and the other fifty per cent. would gladly purchase his goodwill if it were for sale.

I can think of many incidents of his loyalty and proofs he gave of his friendship. One especially touched me. During the seven years I directed the Boston Opera House I had occasion to discharge a certain press agent whose conduct to the artists had been disgraceful. This man and his brother tried to blackmail me, and they published a newspaper in Boston exclusively for the purpose. The criminal proceedings I instituted resulted in a prison sentence for the accused, but the annoyance to me was, as may be imagined, very great. At the most important psychological moment Kahn left his own pressing affairs, took a night train to Boston, attended a

meeting of the board of directors, of which he was a member, and proposed a vote of confidence in me, which was carried unanimously. This is one example of his many kindly and unselfish actions. His desire to see the Boston Opera House succeed was purely disinterested, as he was neither financially nor morally involved. When, through the indifference of Bostonians, the war, and the death of Eben D. Jordan, the institution was allowed to die, I know that Kahn regretted it far more than anyone else except myself.

CHAPTER IX

THÉÂTRE DES CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES—MONTE CARLO —WAR

THE American public I have found ruthless in its demands for variety, and the constant change of programme that was expected proved to be a terrific strain on the organization of the Opera House, and more especially on its finances. The fees paid to well-known artists were exorbitant and very apt to cripple an ordinary production. Singers will, of course, take smaller fees for long engagements; and the forming of an Operatic Trust for America seemed to me the only solution of this problem. During my first season I had a working arangement with the Metropolitan and Chicago Opera Houses that proved most satisfactory; and I realized that if it could be enlarged to include Paris and London and so provide for nine instead of three months contracts, that the artists as well as the producers would benefit.

Harry Higgins, the director of Covent Garden, came to Boston during what proved to be my last season to persuade me to give Edvina a few performances. We discussed the project of an International Operatic Trust, and both agreed that Paris should be made the centre of such a scheme. Arrangements were made for me to take the Boston Opera Company to Paris for a season. The idea at first had seemed

rather like taking coals to Newcastle, but in spite of discouragement the American singers were a great success.

The Théâtre des Champs-Elysées was leased, and a powerful committee formed to support us that included Baron Frédéric d'Erlanger, Lord Grimthorpe, the Marquis of Ripon, Otto H. Kahn, Eben D. Jordan and Clarence Mackay.

The principal feature of our first season in Paris was to be a series of Wagnerian performances, including "Tristan," "Meistersinger," and "Parsifal," to be sung by German singers in German for the first time in the history of Paris. The conductors engaged for the occasion were Nikisch, Felix Weingartner and Albert Coates.

I was warned by many of my friends in Paris that I was running a great risk, and that in all probability the performances would be interrupted by antagonistic demonstrations. I was, however, determined to risk "le tout pour le tout," and the result was gratifying beyond words. Success attended our enterprise, and in the month of June, 1914, Parisians flocked to hear Wagner sung in its original language. At the end of the performance of "Tristan" the public remained standing for half an hour, repeatedly calling for the artists and the conductor. On the following day there appeared in "Le Temps" a remarkable criticism by M. Lalo, proclaiming that Wagner's masterpiece had never before been so well presented in Paris.

The first part of the season was devoted to Italian opera, and we chose "L'Amore dei Tre Re" for the opening. Mr. Higgins had suggested that Madame

Edvina should sing the rôle of Fiora. Although I had little confidence in the wisdom of his selection I made no objection; unfortunately neither the opera nor Madame Edvina was enthusiastically received by the French public, a fact which not unnaturally caused the prima donna a good deal of annoyance.

However, the partial failure of Italian opera was more than compensated for by the phenomenal success of the German. In 1914 Baron von Schoen was German ambassador in Paris. His wife was a Belgian, a woman of much personal charm and a great lover of music, and their daughter was exceptionally gifted and an enthusiastic student of classic dancing. The welcome that the Parisians gave to the German singers delighted them, and they were profuse in their thanks to me for the small part I had played in directing the season.

I was a frequent visitor to the German embassy, and towards the middle of July—that is to say about twenty days before war was declared—Baron von Schoen informed me that he wished to give a banquet at the embassy in honour of the German singers and conductors, and all those who had contributed to the success of the opera.

The German embassy, a large, imposing residence near the Rive Gauche, was brilliantly illuminated on what, I believe, was the last occasion the ambassador entertained in an official capacity. If the Baron knew that a month later he and his family would be called upon to leave Paris by special train, and that his departure would be watched by a gloomy, hostile, but well-behaved crowd, he certainly kept his secret well concealed.

Among the exceptionally brilliant throng were the Austrian, Italian and Russian ambassadors with their wives, the Prince of Monaco, father of Prince Louis, and several minor royalties who were interested in music. Nothing could have been more cordial than the greetings which took place between the German and foreign diplomats.

During the evening Baron von Schoen showed me a communication stating that the Emperor was highly delighted with the success of the German opera in Paris, and wished to have a box reserved for him, should the event be repeated, as he hoped it would, the following spring.

The Prince of Monaco, who was a frequent guest of the German ambassador, asked me whether it would not be possible to organize a German opera season in Monte Carlo early in 1915. The suggestion appealed to me, but I realised it would be difficult to arrange the dates, as the American season lasted until late in the spring.

I saw much of the Prince after our introduction at the embassy. He asked me, I remember, to call on him the next day. He lived in what is now the Avenue President Wilson. I found the house gloomy and strangely un-French. The Prince was a tall, dark man with a Vandyck beard tinged with grey; his manner was cold and reserved until his interest was awakened in a subject, when he would become very keen and anxious to know every detail. My first interview with him took place in a small study where, I believe, he spent most of his time chronicling the records of the remarkable explorations he made in his yacht. The house was partially destroyed

by a bomb during the war. I do not know whether his treasures escaped or not. My first visit lasted over an hour, and I was surprised to find how much he knew about the technical side of opera.

The Paris season was now completely dead. I was personally worn out with over-work and anxious to get away. During the early part of the season at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, my old friend, André Messager, that cultured musician and talented composer of "Véronique," introduced me to Madame Louis Stern, a relation of the famous banker. Ernesta, as she is familiarly known to her friends on the Riviera, is an extraordinary personality, and the possessor of great wealth. Her house in the Faubourg St. Honoré was a rendezvous for eminent artists, politicians, journalists and people of the fashionable world. I was frequently her guest during the spring of 1914, and one day she asked me where I went for my summer holidays. I told her I always chose the quietest spot I could find in Southern Italy, on the Mediterranean. She owned a villa at Cap Martin on the French Riviera, and as she never used it in the summer, she put it at my disposal, assuring me that the gardens were beautiful and that I should find absolute quiet and repose, as nobody ever thought of going to Cap Martin during the hot months. I gladly accepted her hospitality, and about the 20th July installed myself at the villa, finding it to be all that she had prophesied. It is impossible for the director of an important opera house to ever take a complete rest, for no sooner is one season over than it is necessary to commence preparations for the following year. Con-

sequently I was obliged to take with me several of my executive staff, who were all Italians, to help in the preparation of the mise-en-scène and other details connected with the new operas I had planned for the following year. Among the party of twelve I was the only Englishman.

We had a very happy time together, and spent our time motoring, sailing and swimming. A friend of mine once said to me, "My dear Russell, it seems to me you spend all your summers in Monte Carlo, swimming, singing and sinning." He used the last epithet in relation to the gambling tables, but, although I lived within a stone's throw of the Casino, I only entered its precincts on one or two occasions, for as a form of amusement I confess roulette bores me more than anything I have ever tried.

My holiday at Cap Martin was a complete success. The perfect temperature, the eternal sunshine and the starlit nights made me laugh at the snobbism of the people who take their holidays in the shivering winds and cloudy days of Deauville, Trouville, and other fashionable over-crowded resorts of Northern France. But my peaceful dream was brought to an abrupt termination by the declaration of war on the fatal third of August, 1914.

I had driven over to Monte Carlo in the hope of getting more information about the startling news, and found the shops packed with people attempting to buy up the available foodstuffs. The shopkeepers, who had been called to the Front, were quite gay and almost ridiculed the panic of their customers. The manager of Potin told me he was joining up that night, but expected that it would be all over in

fifteen days as, of course, a European war was impossible.

Nevertheless, the Casino closed its doors, and when I returned to Cap Martin I found notices to the effect that aliens were requested to leave France within twenty-four hours. Our villa was only a few miles from the Italian frontier, and my friends hastily packed their belongings and got away as quickly as they could, not knowing whether their country was going to side with the Allies or Germany.

It was not amusing to find oneself alone in a twenty-roomed house, and so I decided to close the villa and took an apartment in Monte Carlo. In those early days there was no question of men of my age being needed at the Front; and as I shared the general belief that the war would be over in three months, I continued quite calmly to make preparations for my opera season in America.

It was not until the following September that I received a telegram from Jordan, stating that the directors of the Chicago and Boston Opera Companies had decided that, owing to the serious financial conditions in America, the opera houses could not open the following winter. As America was taking no part in the war, my colleagues and I considered this a most unfair proceeding, both to the artists and everybody concerned. Otto Kahn shared my views on the subject, and with his usual sense of justice decided to keep open the Metropolitan. I did not in the least blame my friend Jordan. He had personally subscribed over two hundred thousand dollars a year to give Boston opera during six years; and when people said that the Bostonians were not

giving adequate support I have seen men shrug their shoulders and laughingly say: "It is Jordan's baby." When I think of how little gratitude he received for his undertaking I cannot blame him for joining hands with Chicago and taking the first opportunity of terminating his liability. Had the war not endured, I am certain that Jordan would have tried once again to open the Boston Opera House; but death claimed this splendid citizen too early, and Boston and America lost in him one of the most generous, noble and kind-hearted men that the world has ever known.

I enjoyed my prolonged rest and found the surroundings of Monte Carlo delightfully congenial. After a few weeks, however, a storm broke over my head, caused by the combustion of professional jealousy, which completely shattered my peace. It became known in the inner circles of the Casino that the late Prince of Monaco had invited me to organize a German opera season for the Principality. Although the war made the suggestion preposterous, my continued presence in the town was resented by those who had actual control of the Opera House. Knowing that the Boston Opera House was closed, they came to the conclusion that I was living in Monte Carlo with a view to obtaining the direction of their own institution. Nothing, as a matter of fact, was further from my mind, and my surprise may be imagined when one day, while walking through the public gardens, I was followed by a man who, pointing at me, shouted at the top of his voice: "There goes the friend of Baron von Schoen! There is the man who brought German singers to Paris and

gave German opera in the German language a month before the war! There is the spy, who, under the cloak of art, converted the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées into a hot-bed of espionage!"

Feeling against the Germans was, of course, intense. A small, menacing crowd rapidly gathered around me, and I was only rescued from what was beginning to be a dangerous situation by the quick and kindly action of the guards of Monaco. My accuser was arrested and later sentenced to prison for his unjustifiable attack. Fortunately for me, Lady Bertie of Thame, the wife of the British ambassador in Paris, one of the most charmingly kind English women I have ever known, was staying with her niece, Lady Eva Wemyss, at Villa Baird. When she heard the vicious reports circulated about me she asked Lord Bertie to take the matter up, and within a very short time the seriousness of interfering with a British subject was forced upon my enemies.

The Riviera during the war was like an exquisite vessel which, emptied of its contents, appeared more beautiful than ever. The sun shone brilliantly and the flowers blossomed luxuriantly that autumn, making it almost impossible to realize that only a few hundred miles to the north Hades had been made on earth. Gradually wraith-like beings were sent southwards, who appeared puzzled by the warmth and peace of the sheltered coast; and from them we learnt of horrors untold. We did our best to coax them back to strength and to divert their minds by musical entertainments.

Realizing then that when the war ended music

and the arts would help to heal the wounds of the world, I did not altogether abandon my artistic enterprises. The information I received from America convinced me that the Boston Opera House would remain closed indefinitely, and so for the time I was left entirely free. I became absorbed in a project that interested me intensely and that I had long hoped to materialize. This was the creation of an operatic institution where students could not only receive the best possible training, but also have an opportunity of being heard in public without passing through the hands of usurious agents who demanded sums of money for giving them debuts in small unimportant theatres in Italy.

My dear friend, Jean de Reszke, was enthusiastic about the plan. I made arrangements whereby we could obtain a lease of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, which was exactly suited to our purpose. Jean agreed to become director of the school if I could manage the opera house. In spite of the preoccupation of the war, the French people were keenly interested and ready to give their support to the new movement.

During the many years of my connection with operatic institutions I had seen so much misery amongst students, and especially English speaking students who were anxious to make a career, that I was happy at the thought of at last finding a solution to their troubles. Space will not permit me to tell some tales I know ; they would rival even Guy de Maupassant and his tales of broken hearts, shattered homes and embittered lives !—of young girls and young men, having no qualifications for such

a career, and others having a decided capacity for operatic success, mulcted by teachers, agents and so-called impresarios, and hounded from theatre to theatre, town to town, unable to get the debut for which they had paid. The streets of half the towns of Northern Italy are soaked with the tears of disappointed young singers! Neither France, nor Italy, nor Austria, nor even Germany, is to blame; only the indifference of the English speaking peoples to the operatic aspirations of their gifted children.

It is easy to blame foreigners for dealing unfairly with them, but what concern is it of theirs whether they succeed in Europe? They have enough to do to educate and launch their own young singers, and have their hands quite full trying to keep their myriad opera houses open, while artists' fees are trebled owing to American competition. We know that no people in the world help youthful talent with more bounteous liberality than the Americans; and in no other country can one find such men as Rockefeller, Otto Kahn, Jordan, Higginson, Flagler and a thousand others. But why, with these examples of generosity before us, is there no organization to protect our operatic students? Just as captains of great steamers begin by sailing in unimportant ships, so must operatic students begin by singing in unimportant theatres.

Whatever may be said for or against operatic art, it cannot be denied that it embraces more of the arts than any other form of stage production. Perhaps people do not realize how many different factors enter into an operatic performance. There

is the composer of the music, the librettist, the artist who designs and paints the scenery, the orchestra and its conductor, the dancers, the art of lighting and, last but not least, the singers, who in the modern lyric drama must also be actors. If these factors are to be made a harmonious whole, there must be some school of preparation quite independent of commercial results. A great singer is probably only born once in a century; but they are not really helpful to good opera, being generally so much more interested in their own success than that of the production as a whole, that they often mar instead of make good the ensemble. What can be more fatal to the romantic spirit than to see a five-foot Romeo wobbling on tip-toes as he woos a six-foot Juliet; or more annoyingly diverting than when Marguerite's sweet seventeen years resemble seventy, or to watch Mimi force a hectic cough from a mass of corpulence. A great poet once said: "*Les poèmes meurent lorsque des êtres vivants s'y introduisent.*" This truth is often forced upon us in the supreme love-duet between Tristan and Isolde, when both hero and heroine are separated, not only by the untimely arrival of that tedious King Mark, but by the ungainly forms of the lovers.

These incongruities are, I admit, difficult to overcome, but if the hundreds of operatic students who are everywhere planning careers could be gathered together under one direction, it would be easier for managers to choose those whose appearance would not entirely rob illusion from the rôles they play.

The great need is for a preparatory theatre or a

small opera house, subsidized by private means and exclusively devoted to English speaking talent. Mr. Otto Kahn, who is always ready to support new ideas, once called this project a post-graduate course. He was right ; for all lessons and all tuition are worse than useless unless followed by experience, and the stage is the only university for the operatic student.

It is said, especially by those whose teaching interests are in America, that the " preparatory theatre " should be established over there. This is impossible ; the cost would be too great, the public too indifferent and the debutantes would be too remote from the operatic activity so essential to their artistic development.

The prospect of a theatre of the importance of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées becoming an institution for debutantes delighted all those who were interested in the stage. I went to America almost at once, where I received much encouragement from Mr. Kahn and others. My visit was brief, and I booked my return passage back to England on the *Lusitania* and, like the hundreds of other passengers, was not at all frightened by the warning issued by Count Bernstein, the German ambassador. Two days before the date of sailing I received a telegram informing me that Mr. Willie Crocker, the famous banker, was contemplating the building of an opera house in San Francisco. I was told that he was anxious to discuss the matter with me, so, cancelling my passage, I started at once for the Pacific coast. The Crockers owned one of the most beautiful villas in California, and I was enjoying

their kindly hospitality when the news came of the tragic fate of the *Lusitania*.

Later the submarine menace became acute, and people were not only frightened to cross the ocean, but women were only allowed to do so by permission of the Government.

The Committee decided that in view of the gravity of the situation, it would be better to postpone the establishment of the International Academy until after the war. The necessity for this decision was undeniable. People were no longer in the humour to deal with artistic problems. I hoped, at the time, that the scheme would be revived as soon as the war was over. Later, when I did broach the subject to a few members of the original committee, I no longer found the same spirit of enthusiasm that had formerly prevailed. Death had robbed us of our treasurer, Lord Grimthorpe, and Jean de Reszke was growing old and, owing to the loss of his son, had decided to abandon Paris. The need for such an institution must be realized in the near future, and I still look forward to that day.

The Californian scheme did not materialize, and I returned to England almost immediately. In February, 1916, Lord Grimthorpe sent me to Rome on a mission, concerning the Italian Government, to Sir Rennell Rodd, the British ambassador. Italy was still a neutral power, but loyal to the Allies, though the English people seemed to consider her attitude enigmatic. Grimthorpe's letter to the ambassador reflected this feeling in the following sentence :—

" There was a rumour here in Paris yesterday

that Italy had declared war, but I shall not believe it until I see the official announcement."

I had known the Rodds slightly for years and been their guest at many of the delightful musical evenings they gave in Rome, when Sir Rennell was first secretary of the embassy. Lady Rodd was a very remarkable woman. She seemed to absorb the spirit of Rome more profoundly than most English people. Her devotion to children was extraordinary, and I remember noticing how they all adored her when she organized theatricals and entertainments for them at the embassy. I was glad of the opportunity, after so many years, of renewing my acquaintance with these delightful people, and although my visit to Rome on this occasion was extremely brief, I had sufficient time to realize how popular they had made themselves with the Romans.

After the ambassador had read Grimthorpe's letter and given me the information I needed, he asked whether I would be willing to act as King's messenger and take despatches to London. Only too glad to be of the smallest service, I accepted the task at once, and was handed a white canvas bag, shaped like a small bolster, with the royal coat of arms stamped in black on the sides. It was altogether a most conspicuous article, and I felt, clasping it to my side, as though every eye was upon me and every hand eager to snatch it away. Italy had not yet joined the Allies, and German spies were everywhere. I suspected everyone and had a most anxious time. When I arrived at Dover I was much relieved when the captain of the Channel boat, Captain Walker, perhaps realizing

my state of nerves, allowed me to occupy his private cabin. His anxiety at times was appalling, as he told me that a German submarine might catch us at any moment, and in fact, it was very shortly after this trip that the disaster to the *Sussex* occurred.

CHAPTER X

WINTER IN ROME WITH PRINCE ORSINI

THE name of Prince Domenico Orsini is linked forever with the mediæval history of Italy. He is a nobleman by inheritance, and the roots of his family stretch far back to the days of a family autocracy as unquestioned as the feudal system—which indeed it was.

It is large in my mind that to the persistence of these noble breeds the Italy as she is known to the world owes much of her virile confidence and courage. Even the most casual traveller to-day learns to associate with its cities the names of their great princes. The castles, palaces, ancient churches, gardens, each had its being at their command. In Milan the memory of the Sforzas greets one in massive walls of stone; Florence speaks of the Medici in a hundred ways, and the ghosts of long dead Borgias haunt the still canals of Venice. In Rome the names of the Colonna and Orsini have become indistinguishable from the history of the city. These nobles loved their soil, and amongst the world's ex-patriots there are none more desolate than they when forced to surrender their one time heritage.

During my first visit to Italy I became fascinated by the history and romance of the Roman Campagna and keenly interested in the excavations, doing what

little I could to further the work. It was in this way that I met Domenico Orsini, who, with his spontaneous enthusiasm, was helping the cause in a practical manner. Like all Romans, he is filled with a patriotic zeal, but shares with them the common failing of procrastination. This defect has given him the nickname of Monday, in place of Sunday, the equivalent of Domenico.

It was the first winter after the war, when the interest of the world was still centred on political, and not artistic, movements, that I found myself a person of leisure. Orsini hearing this, asked me to come to Rome. I eagerly accepted the invitation, and there followed several of the most strange and interesting months of my life.

He was living at the time in an apartment of the Orsini palace in the Via Monte Savelli. For some time, like many of the great " Black " families, the Orsini had been very hard-up and could only afford to occupy a mere corner of the huge palace. The financial shipwreck which reduced the family to a state of comparative poverty was precipitated by the father of the present Prince.

Rising from the ruins of the Marcellus Theatre, built by Cæsar Augustus in memory of his favourite nephew, the Orsini palace is still one of the landmarks of Rome. For hundreds of years it was a centre of the social life of the great, and known throughout Europe for its priceless treasures of historical art.

The weeks I spent within its walls were actually the last days of the Orsini regime, for that spring the palace was finally purchased by the present Duchessa Sermonetta, when Orsini and his two daughters

were forced to abandon even the one small apartment they had clung to. The contents of the palace have been scattered far and wide, and the very archives of the house, covering a period of over one thousand years, were sold, fortunately passing into the possession of the municipal library of Rome.

I shall never forget the benign dignity of my host and his charming daughters during those trying weeks. They speak English quite perfectly, and both the girls were delightfully musical. Donna Hildagarde, the elder, painted well and played the piano, while her younger sister was a harpist of considerable ability. Although they felt their position acutely, they played their parts with cheerful perfection and did their best to amuse the friends who came to see them. It was their amazing pride, I think, that kept them alive and enabled them to deprive themselves of the necessities of life rather than ask a favour of anyone.

The greatest difficulty that winter was keeping ourselves warm, and those who have never lived in Rome cannot possibly imagine the intense cold harboured by a palace. The rooms were so enormous and so lofty that an ordinary wood fire made no perceptible difference in the temperature. Night after night we dined in wraps and overcoats and afterwards would huddle around the grate, sipping hot tea, until it was time to go shivering to our icy bedrooms. It was during these long evenings when the flames sent strange shadows over the frescoed walls and the wind howled without, that Orsini mused on the history of his house, his hands stretched towards the fire, his tall figure strangely still and impressive in the dusk. The two girls sat on either

side of the fireplace silently knitting until the needles fell from their numbed fingers.

The antiquity of the Orsini family is such that its origin is purely legendary. Among the more trustworthy historians Sansovino traces the family tree back to several centuries before Christ, and Novaes mentions several canonized members in the year 222 A.D. But Bovio gives the most picturesque and plausible account of the sire of the Casa Orsini :—

" A certain Gothic chief, called Alduino, who had won many battles against the Vandals, died about the year 400 A.D. and his widow fled from Italy to Flanders. Soon after a son was born whom she called Mundilla, meaning in Gothic " fatherless." At one time the child's nurse, finding herself unable to provide him with enough milk, gave him to a bear to be suckled, and so he came to be called Orsino, or little bear. After his mother's death Mundilla Orsino journeyed to Rome, where he served the Empress Pulcheria with valour and distinction. His reward for these services was the gift of several castles and much land in Umbria."

A man called Caio Orso Flaceo is also known to have served under Constantine the Great in 300 A.D. in the Eastern Roman Empire, and, on account of treason and jealousy, retired to lands given him in Umbria. It may be possible that he is the direct ancestor of the present family. The Orsini could use the same reply as did another old Italian family in answer to the question as to the authenticity of their tree :—" All we know for certain is that this legend of our origin has been in the family for seven hundred years."

In the year 432 the Emperor Teodosio conferred the title of Prince on the head of the house of Mundilla Orsino or his descendant. At the same time there rose in power near Rome several other great families, of which the Colonnas were the only rivals in strength to the Orsini.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries the Papal faction calling itself Guelfi, and the Imperial faction, the Ghibellini, came into conflict. The Orsini gave their support to the Pope and the Colonnas to the State; thus the two richest and most powerful groups added their weight to an already sanguinary civil war.

In 1010 the Orsini, possibly due to military losses and defeats, split up into many branches and settled in distant parts of Europe, France, Germany, Austria, Bohemia, etc., where their descendants still survive. This family, for its unfailing support of the papal throne, was awarded great wealth. Many became cardinals and five were actually made popes.

There are countless documents which show what power lay in their hands. One, written about 1600 to a sovereign about to receive a visit from a Prince Orsini, shows that they demanded the privileges of royalty. The letter begins:—

> "In answer to the question which you make me as to the manner in which their Highnesses the Princes Orsini are used to being received, let me tell you that not only have they always been shaken by the right hand by all Emperors, but on the occasion of the visit of the Prince to the ambassador of France, the latter put himself to bed rather than inflict on the Prince the indignity

which his official position demanded by giving him only his left hand in greeting. You will also find the Orsini arms in all books on royal heraldry. The reason is clear. Have not the Orsini owned . . . . . " [There follows a list of the various estates which were in the possession of the family, including names of large provinces such as Saxony, Brandenburg, the Romagna, Sicily, etc.] " Furthermore, the Holy Roman Empress Eleonora calls the Prince Orsini cousin (Consanguineo). Everywhere is he given the title of sovereign and highness, and even the King of France treats the principals of the family as his equals."

Although the letter offers no threat as to the punishment inflicted on any one not giving due respect to the princely visitor, there is no doubt of what was expected in the way of homage.

Another interesting document states that, " With the Dukes of Bracciano and Pitigliano (secondary titles) is given by the Holy Roman Emperor power to create counts, knights, doctors and notaries ; to legitimize bastards and to mint money.

Not even the Borgias in the sixteenth century succeeded in curbing the power of this house ; and in 1511, after a combined victory of the Orsini and the Colonnas over the Borgias, the two former signed a peace. In commemoration of this a medal was struck with the inscription " Pax Romana," and the heads of the chiefs of the two families were engraved thereon.

One of the most interesting honours which these two families share is the title of " Prince Attendant on the Pontificial Throne." This gives them the

right to stand on the step next highest to the Pope when in attendance on him. To this day the Orsini are the only family who when writing to the Sovereigns of Italy or Spain have the right to begin their letters " *Nous qui sommes autant que vous. . .* "

The Colonnas are believed to take their name from Trajan's Column outside Rome, which stands on their lands. Their name is almost entirely associated with the fortunes of the Holy Roman Emperors, and their renown due to the wars against the very much stronger and richer Orsini. Their battle cry " *Popolo e Colonna* " is as typical of them as the Orsini's " *Orso e Chiesa.*"

The title of Prince Attendant, which was conferred on both families at the same time, was given with the hope of pacifying both the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, but proved to be only another cause for contention over matters of precedence. This was finally settled by the two Princes taking turns at the honour.

Again in the nineteenth century the Roman aristocracy was divided into two camps when Rome was declared the capital of the new kingdom of Italy. Some remained faithful to the old regime, hoping that the King of Sardinia, who was a devout Catholic, would not consent to occupy the city and state which acknowledged the Pope as its only sovereign. Others joined the Liberal Party and became loyal supporters of the new movement. The enmity which existed between the two factions exists to this very day, and in Rome there is still the Clerical Party, the members of which are called " Blacks " and their opponents, the " Whites " or Royalists.

I remember one example of the unreasoning narrowness produced by this loyalty to the old regime. Prince Lancellotti, who died not long ago, would never recognise the new State of Italy, and as a sign of mourning kept the principal gateway of his palace closed. Even on occasions when he gave great balls and dinners the guests were obliged to descend from their carriages and enter through a small door. He was waiting, he said, the return of the Pope as the independent master of his own State.

A few years ago Orsini married Mrs. Robert Rowan, a dark-haired Californian of such distinguished bearing that she might well be the daughter of an ancient European house. She is the mother of Mrs. William McAdoo. It is through this marriage that the Orsini fortunes have been resuscitated. But the New World also gives something more valuable than wealth, and one can but think that the effect of its exuberance of spirit will add strength to the old world.

CHAPTER XI

WITH MAETERLINCK IN AMERICA

THE question, why does anyone write and especially why write memoirs, is often put. Every author justifies himself in his own way, but most agree that they write because they have something to express, because they find it a pleasant way of earning their bread, because it appeals to their vanity or ambition. These excuses also apply to the compiling of memoirs, but in this case there is added another and more plausible one—the joy of being able to write about one's friends. There is a satisfaction in saying that we believe in our friends, that we admire and value them ; and to register this in print should be the objective of every biographer. When humble outsiders write about the great whom they venerate, there follows too frequently a series of quasi-heroic pictures, out of proportion in drawing and over-tinged with flattery ; but I have found that when one artist depicts another one finds sympathy in place of flattery, and understanding in place of exaggeration. In other words, the artistic temperament can best interpret the artist.

Of all my men friends, it gives me most joy to speak of Maurice Maeterlinck, who is also my neighbour in the South of France. Here is a man combining the humility and simplicity of a peasant with the

distinction and culture of a grand seigneur ; a mind above pettiness, who with an Olympian gesture refuses awards and honours—a man fearless of physical danger, but who trembles with nervousness at the thought of making a speech ; who, to escape the adoration of the public, has isolated himself from all but a few friends and spends his days in cultivating his garden. There is in his expression and poise of head something suggestive of the finest type of Newfoundland dog. From a mass of white hair one lock falls across his eyes, almost an intentional curtain, for only in these eyes is there any reflection of the mystical imagination so active behind them. The sensitive curve of brow is in strange contrast to a square chin proclaiming his obstinacy. The smile of Maeterlinck is younger and more naive than that of many a child. He has implicit faith in human beings, a sense of fun and great powers of affection. To his intimates he is " Bébé." He is devoted to gardening, fond of boxing and motoring and thoroughly enjoys exercise and good food. He never talks about his own work, being, in fact, diffident and unwilling to discuss literature or art of any kind. His extreme shyness most people find disconcerting, for as he talks his eyes are half closed and he seldom looks at his listener.

I have spent many happy days at " Les Abeilles " ; days which have been made light-hearted and gay by the presence of Madame Maeterlinck, or Sélysette, the poet's child-wife, whose real name, Renée Dahon, everyone has forgotten. A slight boyish figure—typically French—a clear complexion—large dark eyes—a well-shaped mouth that curls into impish

MAURICE MAETERLINCK
AGED 9

MAURICE MAETERLINCK
AGED 28

smiles, displaying a superb set of white teeth—a ringing laugh proclaiming a *joie de vivre*—a bright intelligence—an unending fund of high spirits—a delight in dressing in boys' garments in which she looks no more than fifteen, such is the woman who has captivated and held the affections of the poet-philosopher. Her love of teasing is in no way daunted by the retiring and stately presence of her husband, as when she discovered my admiration for his person she found infinite delight in calling him all the ugly names she could think of, though in her heart of hearts she thoroughly agrees with me. She delights in speaking English, and uses formal phrases with a deliciously un-English intonation, and often entirely in the wrong order.

Since the earliest days of Maeterlinck's fame his name has been connected with that of Georgette Leblanc, the actress, whom for so many years the world called Madame Maeterlinck, and to whom he dedicated many of his books. Georgette Leblanc, as I knew her, was a beautiful woman with a Grecian figure, large expressive eyes and exquisite colouring. But never at any time was she a great actress, and I am compelled to say that her singing was pitiable. The quality of her voice was harsh, her intonation defective, and she knew nothing whatever about music. She insisted on taking the leading parts in nearly all the poet's greatest works, and seemed quite oblivious of her artistic defects. She had a keen dramatic instinct, knew the value of Maeterlinck's works from a theatrical standpoint and undoubtedly exploited his genius. Thus her reputation rose, supported by his name. It was, I think, her curious

type of intelligence that made her life with the poet, on the whole, harmonious and pleasant.

I remember one occasion when Carré, the clever and able director of the Opera Comique in Paris, decided to produce "Pelléas." Georgette at once claimed the right to sing Mélisande. Debussy was consulted, and after going through the score with her declared that her voice was inadequate and her interpretation entirely unworthy of the part. Unless Carré found another actress, Debussy announced that he would not allow the performance to take place. Mary Garden, then beginning her brilliant career, was chosen for the rôle, and her subsequent triumph fully justified his judgment. Georgette, furious with the composer, rushed in hot haste to Maeterlinck and demanded his support. Her interest in the performance entirely centred on whether or not she appeared as the star. Maeterlinck, caring nothing whatever about the production, and disliking above all things to be bored, promised, for the sake of peace at home, to use his influence.

In those days Debussy was living with his first wife at the top of a high old house in the Latin quarter of Paris. Maeterlinck arrived at his attic, armed with a cane. Being a man of few words, he realised that a stick might be more effective than an eloquent speech. The door was opened by Madame Debussy, who asked what he wanted. The reply was short: "You see this stick, Madame? I have brought it to beat your husband because he refuses to allow Georgette to sing in "Pelléas." Madame Debussy began to cry, and swore that her husband was ill. This silenced the poet's wrath, and he left

the house, saying that musicians were useless and troublesome members of society.

Georgette then took legal action in Maeterlinck's name to prevent the Opera Comique from giving the opera unless she headed the cast. Fortunately the suit failed, and the most superb lyric drama of the present age triumphed without her.

In 1919, to the astonishment of the world at large, it was announced that the great poet had married a very young girl. The story of his life appeared in fragments, and it was not until 1920, when Georgette Leblanc, visiting America, succumbing to the bait held out by the Yellow Press, gave an outrageously lurid account of her life with the poet and his present marriage, that the public knew anything whatever about his private affairs.

The first of these articles was headed by black headlines two inches high that stretched across the centre sheet of a Sunday journal. "The Intimate Details Of The Most Extraordinary Romance Of All History, By the Woman Who Fed The Fires Of Poet Maeterlinck's Genius." Below was an announcement by the editors that this remarkable story would be featured for ten issues. Photographs of the authoress, Georgette Leblanc, and the hero, supplemented by impossible drawings of dramatic incidents, were used in illustration of the first and following instalments.

The introduction to this series was the confession by Georgette of the fine sensibilities of her soul, the desire for the development of her musical and artistic talents, and the conviction obsessing her since early youth that she was destined to play a

part in an epic drama of love. She describes the curious thrill that shot through her when she heard for the first time of Maeterlinck, the thrill convincing her that here was the man ordained by the gods to be her lover. The meeting occurred during the following year, and, she claims, resulted in the fulfilment of her happiest dreams. "I shall tell you in a later instalment," she continues, "how I fed his genius and watched it grow." Follows an account of their life together in the beautiful old abbey of St. Wandrille, in Normandy, of her sacrifices and devotion to the poet's artistic enterprises, to which she gave herself without thought of her own ambitions. The result of this selflessness was triumphs for the poet, and no cloud appeared on the horizon of their life. Then came the day when she found herself cast aside. The cause of this tragedy, shattering a blissful existence, is traced to the production of the "Blue Bird" in Paris, by Madame Réjane, in which Georgette took an active hand and found special interest in the eighty children included in the cast.

The part of the Cold-in-the-head was played by a small, dark, vivacious girl, older than the rest. The attention of the poet, who for some time had been sad and melancholy owing to the death of his mother, was diverted by the high spirits of this young performer and his interest aroused. So the story proceeds, telling how this child, called Silver Tassel from the ornaments she wore on her little black cap, finally became a member of the Maeterlinck household and the recipient of love and devotion from Georgette, who did all she could to encourage so strange a friendship.

After the declaration of war and the invasion of the German army, the abbey, which was in the danger zone near the Seine, was perforce abandoned. The household scattered, Georgette continued to interest herself in plays and was also occupied with the comforting of the wounded, leaving Silver Tassel, who was now called Sélysette, after one of Maeterlinck's heroines, constantly alone with the poet.

In the early years of the war Maeterlinck found his Mecca in the South of France, and on the broad hillside between Grasse and Nice built a villa. He surrounded the gardens with high walls, and settled down thankfully in this impregnable retreat.

It was during an absence of Georgette from " Les Abeilles " that she learnt she had been unthroned. Silver Tassel was the usurper, and smiled at her predecessor from the vantage point of the married woman. Thus she bore not only the name of Maeterlinck, but became the inheritor of his fortune. True it was that the poet invited Georgette to remain in his house and form one of the intimate trinity of friends ; but the knowledge that she was no longer necessary and foremost with the man to whom she had devoted her life made this too bitter a prospect. Only one thing could she do—and she did it.

Thus wrote Georgette with that lavish disregard which assumes that half the truth will carry without the rest, and a pen that halted at no exaggeration. I do not attempt to recount her virulence here. It deserves but one reception.

During the war I saw the poet frequently, and he often spent week-ends on my farm. He was deeply

moved by the tragedy which had come upon his country and, for the first time in his life, descended from his self-created heights and mingled with the everyday world. He wished to join the army, but was refused on account of his age, and finding that there was no active part he could take, went from country to country, lecturing for the Allies.

During one of these week-end visits he asked whether I would organize something in America to raise funds for the relief of the thousands of children orphaned by the war. Taking a parcel of manuscript from his pocket, he threw it on the table saying, " Read this when you have time. It is founded on an actual incident I took from the White Book." It was the manuscript of " The Burgomaster of Stilemonde," that admirable and touching war play which Martin Harvey has produced in England. He asked whether I thought the " Blue Bird " as an opera would interest New York, and I told him that if the music was adequate I thought it would be a great success.

The idea of doing something to help the suffering children of Europe appealed to me immensely, and after Maeterlinck's departure I decided to organize a campaign to raise funds on a large scale. I went at once to Paris and asked the aid of my friend, the Comtesse de Berteux. She introduced me to Madame Edward Stern, and an association was formed in a short time under the patronage of the King and Queen of the Belgians and the President of the French Republic.

It was decided that I should produce the " Burgomaster of Stilemonde," in Washington, whither I

went almost immediately. During my visit I was the guest of Mrs. Arthur Glasgow, who was then living in a charming old house that had once been the French embassy. Mrs. Glasgow has since become a popular hostess in London and is a delightful woman with a vivid personality. She was not only a friend, but a fellow-worker, and seldom have I met a more earnest and capable organizer. She threw herself heart and soul into our undertaking and neglected no means of arousing the interest of the people of Washington.

For the first performance of the " Burgomaster of Stilemonde " she gave a large dinner party, and among the guests was Lord Reading, who had been appointed to Washington as Britain's Ambassador Extraordinary. As he entered the rather dimly-lit drawing-room I had the impression that a Vandyck painting had come to life—a splendid head—large dark eyes—strong mouth and chin—features distinctly Jewish in caste, but distinguished by all the noblest traits of that race—kindness in the piercing glance of the keen eyes and an unusual power to hold the attention of a listener. I sat next to him at the theatre, and during the second act, when the principal actor delivered Maeterlinck's simple and beautiful words, was surprised to see tears streaming down his cheeks. Afterwards he said how much he had enjoyed the play and asked me to tell Maeterlinck that he had rendered a service to his country by his masterly treatment of an incident that showed the cruelty of war.

With the play launched in Washington, I proceeded to complete arrangements for the production of the

" Blue Bird " as an opera at the Metropolitan in New York. Mr. Otto Kahn, as usual, gave me every possible assistance, and my old friend and colleague, Gatti-Casazza, placed the resources of his Opera House at my disposal. Nothing was spared to help the cause, and I shall never forget the kindness and courtesy I received from every official connected with the institution. Billy Guard, that delightful Irishman whose genius as a press agent has made him one of the most popular figures in New York, did everything he could to give us publicity. Mr. Edward Ziegler, the courteous and kindly assistant general manager, helped me in every way, and I received staunch support from all my old colleagues.

A committee was formed of representative people in New York. Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr., acted as chairman. Mrs. Newbold le Roy Edgar, Mrs. Whitney Warren, Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, Mr. Otto Kahn, Mr. Willard King and I completed the executive board.

It was decided that in order to make the occasion more interesting to the public, Maurice Maeterlinck must come himself to America to be present at the first performance. Knowing him as I did, I had little hope of being able to persuade him to undertake the journey, but returned to Europe with the determination to silence his protests and convince him that his presence was absolutely necessary. A manager in New York had suggested that I induce Maeterlinck to accept a lecture tour for the United States, and though I informed him that the poet read and understood English, but could not speak a word of it, I was assured that French was good enough.

I went at once to Nice, and the day after my arrival spent the afternoon at Maeterlinck's villa. It seemed more tactful to break the news first to Sélysette, as the prospect of seeing a new country would be more likely to appeal to her than to her husband. I gave her a glowing account of the United States and the American people, and persuaded her to broach the subject. At the first suggestion Maurice jumped out of his chair, his expression one of horror. The idea of leaving his beloved garden to the mercies of a gardener! "What would become of my dogs and flowers if I went away for six months," he cried. " And, in any case, it is absurd to suggest that my presence at the performance could make the slightest difference to the financial results. If people go to the theatre it will be to see the ' Blue Bird,' and certainly not to see me. The idea is preposterous and childish —I shall not go ! I will do all I can to help you over here, but I cannot consent to cross the Atlantic."

He remained obdurate for several days, and Sélysette advised me to drop the matter. Finally, I persuaded a deputation of prominent people connected with the Millerand Fund for War Orphans to call on him and explain how much his presence in America would aid our enterprise. One of them made such a strong appeal on behalf of the children, that he eventually capitulated.

It is impossible to exaggerate the almost childish simplicity of Maeterlinck's nature—his lack of conceit and complete ignorance of the extent of his own fame. He sets no value on worldly attainments, and would rather spend an afternoon in a labourer's cottage than accept the invitation of a royal personage.

As the date of our departure approached his nervousness increased, and the idea grew so repulsive that he offered to subscribe one hundred thousand francs to the children's fund if the New York committee would allow him to remain at home. But the preparations to welcome him were so extensive that I assured him he would have to see it through.

I did everything I could to make his journey comfortable, and the Belgian ambassador offered to send him a diplomatic passport. This he refused with thanks, saying that he did not want any privileges, and took his passport himself to the American consulate in Nice, waiting in line with the other applicants, although, had he sent in his name, he would have been seen at once. When his turn came he was asked the usual questions :—

" What is your name ?"

" Maurice Maeterlinck," replied the poet.

" And your profession ?" asked the clerk.

" A writer," was the answer.

A friend who accompanied him remarked that the young clerk was ignorant and stupid not to have known the profession of one who was an international figure. " Not at all," answered Maeterlinck, naïvely. " I don't know anything about the young man ; why should he know anything about me ?"

We sailed for America in December, 1919, and landed in New York on Christmas Eve. It had been decided that the arrival of the poet was to herald the opening of the " Blue Bird Campaign for Happiness." Thanks to the energetic work of the ladies of our committee, Fifth Avenue was decorated with Blue Birds from end to end, and large banners inscribed

with "Welcome to Maeterlinck," were suspended across the street. Every ingenuity had been used to call attention to the Fund ; the shops were draped with blue, and symbols appeared in every possible corner. A prominent New Yorker was heard to remark that the welcome given to the poet was much greater and more enthusiastic than that extended to kings and queens.

A Blue Bird ball was organised by Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr., while Mrs. Newbold le Roy Edgar threw open her charming little house and entertained the Maeterlincks on every possible occasion.

Lord Dunsany was another lion who had been fêted by New York society that winter, and the two authors met the day after our arrival at a luncheon party given by Mrs. Edgar. I had met the Irish poet many years ago through T. P. O'Connor, to whom I am indebted for many delightful introductions, and remembered him as one of the most original and curious people I had ever known, with the figure of a guardsman and the subtle charm that belongs exclusively to the Irish.

Our hostess was very keen that the two celebrities should meet and exchange ideas, so placed them on either side of her during luncheon. Maeterlinck did not speak English, and was obviously suffering from acute shyness, while Dunsany, if he understood French, did not on that occasion utter a word. Mrs. Edgar exercised all her charm and tact in trying to establish a common ground on which Belgian and Irishman could meet, but both refused to make the slightest advance. They had no desire to speak to one another, and did not attempt to conceal the

fact. Finally, in desperation, the hostess turned to Lord Dunsany and said, in an inviting tone, "Of course, you have read Maeterlinck's book on the Immortality of the Soul? Isn't it wonderful?"

"I never read any books except my own," growled the Irishman, who was already irritated by a draught at his back.

Had Maeterlinck understood this reply he would have been thoroughly amused, for he loathed to have his works discussed in his presence, but Mrs. Edgar, fearing he might be offended, asked him quickly in French if he was familiar with Lord Dunsany's plays. I was sitting beside him, and he turned and whispered frantically in my ear, "Who is this tall, funny-looking man? I have never heard of him before. What does he write?" My answer conveyed nothing to his mind, so with a naïve and humble smile he replied, "Dear madame, I am sorry, but I have never heard of your friend or read any of his plays." After that no further effort was made to fraternize the two lions, and when the party broke up they had not exchanged half a dozen words.

The Maeterlincks were entertained royally by the American people, and were amazed and rather overwhelmed by the invitations showered upon them. Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., was among the hostesses who gave entertainments for them in her beautiful home on Fifth Avenue. I remember soon after our arrival being asked by her to a luncheon party, and among the guests meeting Lady Herbert, her sister, and the beautiful Mrs. Perry Belmont, who later lent her house to the Prince of Wales. Mrs. Vanderbilt's prestige in New York society is

renowned, and we felt conscious that we Europeans had been asked to meet the *crème de la crème* of America.

On that occasion I sat between two people who belonged to the very smart set, and was much amused by their comments on our fellow guests. One lady seemed very much surprised that Maeterlinck had been placed on our hostess's right and that a gentleman of great social prominence was on her left.

"What an extraordinary thing to do. Surely Prince X—— should be on Grace's right," she remarked with obvious disapproval.

Her neighbour seemed less shocked, but replied with the utmost seriousness, "Grace always follows royal example in everything, and she probably remembers that when Frederick the Great entertained Voltaire he was given a seat at the table reserved for kings and princes, while ministers were relegated to another table. When the chamberlain expressed his surprise he was silenced by the Emperor with the remark that '*Les âmes privilégiées rangent à l'égal des souverains.*'"

This incident and many others convinced me that the inner circle of New York society is far more difficult to penetrate than the oldest European society in existence. Mr. Elliott Gregory, who was a most delightful and cultured American, and had entree to every house in New York, told me that Mrs. Mills became so exclusive in the end that she often had to dine alone.

I remember a rather witty remark attributed to Diaghileff when a prominent American hostess

was entertaining him. The huge drawing-room was brilliantly lighted and thronged with beautifully dressed, remarkably jewelled women.

"What do you think of this sight?" he was asked by a friend.

"It is very effective, but to complete it they need a grand duchess," he replied.

This comment, however, no longer applies to New York society, as since the débâcle of Russia, grand dukes and grand duchesses are, I believe, to be found at every party, and no one short of a reigning king or queen can nowadays arouse any enthusiasm.

Social life was entirely new to Maeterlinck and, although he appreciated the hospitality shewn him, it was a great strain on his nerves. He obviously enjoyed himself most when the host or hostess happened to speak his own language, and was in the best of spirits when dining with Mr. and Mrs. Kahn, who speak French fluently and were always able to amuse him.

Another indefatigable person who did much to rouse interest in New York over the arrival of Maeterlinck was Miss Elsie de Wolfe. She has more powers of resistance than any one I have ever met, except, perhaps, Miss Elizabeth Marbury; and though she has neither the impressive figure nor the commanding presence of the latter, she manages to stir and influence the numerous members of her circle without the slightest opposition from anyone. In a certain group of Franco-American society it is she who elects the newcomers, and if Americans arrive in Paris without friends or introductions and have the good fortune to fall into the able and subtle hands of

Elsie de Wolfe, in a very few weeks they will be welcomed in every amusing salon in the gay city.

How does Elsie perform these miracles? And what are the methods she employs to make so many people happy? And how does she manage to create personalities at her own will? The explanation is not difficult to find—it is her marvellous joie de vivre, her extraordinarily kind heart, and the fact that to her has been given a spark that can kindle even the most dull and banal of social gatherings. I have known her in every kind of circumstance and have seen her in contact with all sorts and conditions of people. She has the same good spirits in adversity as in success, and is generous in sharing her numerous friendships with those who would otherwise find life a rather lonely proposition. She has made her activities felt in New York, London and Paris, and, I think, like so many Americans, finds the French capital her favourite playground.

Maeterlinck also passed some very happy hours at Mrs. George Blumenthal's house in Park Avenue, and was interested not only in the house itself, which is, I think, one of the most remarkable in America, but in the amazing collection of beautiful things. We were both fascinated by accounts of the work and study entailed in the creation of this beautiful mansion. She called it her dream house, and the only thing that could be possibly said against it is that it is entirely out of tone with the city in which it is built.

The virile character of American architecture appealed to Maeterlinck, who was amazed at the simplicity and beauty of New York's two great

railway stations. "People who are capable of such colossal achievements will, in time, develop the more intimate arts," he would remark, gazing up at the cliff-like buildings that converted streets into dark valleys. Being himself devoted to the peasant arts of Europe, he naturally sensed the lack of tradition and signs of progressive evolution in the applied arts of America and was often surprised that the houses of many delightful people he visited did not reflect in any way the personalities of their owners. We often pondered over this, deciding that with the growth of the intellectual leisured classes an appetite for artistic possessions would develop, creating not only a demand for original objets d'art, but also raising the standard of taste among manufactured articles.

The poet at once felt the unusual atmosphere of Miss Elsie de Wolfe's house, and congratulated her on the taste with which she had arranged her exquisite possessions, adding that he hoped she was teaching her fellow citizens the secrets of her art.

I remember an unfortunate comment that my friend made, owing to his ignorance of English. We were dining in the palace of a millionaire, and among the guests was Mr. Gary, the steel king, who asked o be presented to the guest of honour. A lady who knew but little French volunteered to make the introduction: "*Il est le roi de style,*" she whispered in the poet's ear. But, thinking she referred to the decorations of the house, he replied, "*Mon Dieu, quel style!*"

As the instinct of the mole is to creep away from the sunlight, so Maurice was always anxious to

escape from the presence of his kindly hosts, though, later, he would often admit that he had quite enjoyed himself.

On one occasion he was so intrigued by his surroundings that it was with difficulty I dragged him away to keep an appointment. It was at a party given in his honour by Mr. and Mrs. Cortlandt Bishop. After an excellent and amusing lunch, our host took us to his library where we were shewn his priceless collection of books. Here was a realm in which the exile felt completely at home, and, had he been a free man I think he would have spent the rest of his sojourn in New York among the Bishops' treasures.

The first performance of the "Blue Bird" as an opera took place on December 27th. During the afternoon I had an interview with the Belgian ambassador, a man of infinite charm and one of Maeterlinck's greatest admirers who, fortunately, understood him perfectly. With much regret he told me that I must insist on his wearing decorations that night, especially the order of the Grand Officier de l'Ordre de Léopold that had lately been conferred upon him by King Albert. I knew nothing of this honour, and on my return reproached my friend for not having told me about it himself. He looked surprised and answered without a shade of affectation, "Oh, but I had forgotten all about it!" Fortunately, Sélysette, with her usual presence of mind, had brought the decoration with her.

Later came the ordeal of persuading Maurice to wear evening clothes. He told me he had only once worn them before—on the occasion of the wedding

of a friend. He loathed the stiff shirt front, the high collar, was unable to tie his cravat, lost his studs and cursed me for bringing him into a sphere that forced him to wear such an uncomfortable and idiotic costume. When finally the star and ribbon were fastened in their proper place he glanced in the mirror and remarked rather bitterly, " Well, I hope you are satisfied ? I look exactly as though I were going into the streets to sell chocolates."

I think that no other audience in the world can equal that of the Metropolitan for sheer spectacular magnificence. On the " Maeterlinck Night " every box was filled with people whose opulence glittered in diamonds and in the sheen of marvellous clothes. Every seat was occupied, and many people wore the emblem of the " Blue Bird," which brought a note of festivity even to the remote corners of the vast opera house.

The arrival of Maeterlinck with the ambassador and Baroness de Cartier was announced by the playing of the Belgian national anthem, and succeeded by a thunder of applause that completely dazed the bewildered poet. It was with difficulty that we persuaded him to make a bow from the front of the box. " But, Madame," he pleaded, " I am sure all this applause is for you and the ambassador. Will you please come in front and let me hide myself?" Madame de Cartier insisted on his remaining where he could be seen, and sat by the much puzzled Sélysette.

The performance was, on the whole, a success. The scenery, the interpretation and the orchestra maintained the high standard of excellence that

distinguishes the productions of the Metropolitan. Unfortunately, Albert Wolff's music proved too heavy for the delightful fairy story, and he utterly failed to catch its fantastic spirit. So one of the most brilliant opportunities for creating an opera comique which would have equalled Hänsel und Gretel was thrown away.

The worst experience, however, was yet to come. The manager of the proposed lecture tour discovered that practically no one in America really wanted to hear lectures in French, and he assured me that unless Maeterlinck consented to speak in English the tour would prove a disastrous financial failure. Although the poet pleaded his utter inability to master another language, his heart was so troubled by the thought of ruining the manager, that he agreed to attempt the impossible.

I tried to facilitate matters by preparing a phonetic translation of the lecture to enable him to acquire the pronunciation mechanically. Morning after morning he would rehearse his task, working as hard as a schoolboy for his first examination. Some of the sentences he repeated sounded more like gibberish than English ; we could but hope that in the end all would be well.

The subject of the lecture was " The Immortality of the Soul," treated from a metaphysical standpoint. It would, I think, have been most acceptable to an audience of professors and students, but even had it been delivered in fluent English, I doubt very much whether it could have been understood by the general public.

What actually took place is worth describing.

On 2nd January the Carnegie Hall was packed from floor to roof with an eager and excited audience. On the platform sat twelve of the most representative men of New York, who officially welcomed the lecturer. Preliminary speeches were made by the executive committee, who explained the great service that Maeterlinck had rendered to the civilized world. When the poet himself stood up to speak the entire public rose with him, and this mark of esteem from the American people is the most touching recollection I have of that remarkable evening.

Poor Maurice, trembling with fear, began to reproduce phonetic sounds he really believed were intelligible. In a very few moments most of us on the platform realised that his words conveyed nothing to the public. There were coughs, low murmurs, the first indications of the storm to come. Finally, a voice from the gallery shouted, "Say, master, can't you speak out a bit louder?" I was sitting quite near Maeterlinck, and at his request translated the remark. This caused slight amusement, and when they saw I was explaining the interruption they laughed good-naturedly. The winning and sympathetic smile of the lecturer seemed to interest them more than what he had to say.

Once more the ill-fated lecture was begun, but voices rose in protest from the body of the hall. "For God's sake speak in French." The situation became tense. The public had paid high prices for their seats and felt justified in expressing their impatience and indignation.

A hurried consultation took place, and the com-

mittee decided that the lecture should be continued in French. The audience received the decision with every sign of approval and good nature, but, alas! no copy of the French text could be found, and it was at least ten minutes before the messenger returned with the manuscript. The Rev. St. Croix Wright kindly offered to act as translator. The result, however, was far from satisfactory, and the audience left the hall obviously disappointed.

Next morning accounts of the poet's failure filled columns in the newspapers, and the news was cabled to all parts of the world. Maeterlinck, however, remained unperturbed, and when a reporter accused him of being too profound for the American public, he replied, "*On m'a dit que les Americains aiment s' embêter.*"

It was impossible to repeat the phonetic English experiment for the proposed lecture tour; and as a result of our decision that henceforth they must be delivered in French, the New York manager brought a law-suit against us, and the recluse of the Abbey of St. Wandrille found himself involved in the complicated mechanism of American justice. The famous firm of Stanchfield and Levy came nobly to his assistance. Stanchfield did everything he could to protect him from the annoyance of legal proceedings, and Lou Levy, the brilliant lawyer, gave many hours of his valuable time in order to smooth the path of the weary poet.

Maeterlinck longed to return to the peace of his garden and to the solace of work, but we pleaded that a sudden retreat would imply failure and that, whatever the cost, we must see the thing through.

In the midst of this uncertainty Mr. Goldwyn, the President of Goldwyn's Moving Picture Corporation, asked Maeterlinck to write a film for his company, proposing that he should go to California and study the technique and conditions of cinema production, with a view to raising the intellectual standard of modern scenario. Mr. Goldwyn's terms were very generous and, in addition to the handsome guarantee, he placed a private car at our disposal.

Early in February we started on a fourteen day journey across the continent. Maurice was much amused at the novelty of such luxurious travel. Our rolling suite of rooms comprised an observation balcony, a parlour, four state-rooms and a bath-room. We travelled by night and were shunted into sidings by day to enable us to visit towns en route. Receptions were arranged and enthusiastic welcomes given to the poet on every occasion.

With the intolerance of a visitor, my friend was irritated by the fact that only by stealth could he procure wine and spirits. In a moment of anger he once described an American banquet as consisting of cold water and speeches. He was much relieved to find when we arrived in Los Angeles that it was possible to obtain small quantities of red wine, at a price, without the risk of further entanglements with American authorities.

A bungalow had been taken for us in Santa Monica, and we at once settled down to enjoy a quiet existence. A charming, but wall-less, garden surrounded the little house. This lack of seclusion puzzled and annoyed Maeterlinck, who considered that the principal value of a garden was its privacy.

A few streets in Santa Monica are lined with splendid eucalyptus trees. One day he asked me to find out why many of them were being cut down. A workman explained that the residents of the street were unable to see what passed by in the road on account of the trees, therefore they were being removed. Maeterlinck was amazed at the answer and shook his head sorrowfully.

While we were dining one evening, what is known as a porch burglar climbed into Sélysette's bedroom. His visit was not discovered until the ladies retired to bed. Suddenly we heard shrieks and, rushing upstairs, I found that cupboards had been opened, drawers ransacked and some jewellery stolen. The household became hysterical, and I quickly telephoned for the police.

While they were busy investigating I went back to the dining-room to see what had become of Maurice. He was calmly writing and smoking his pipe, and had not stirred during the commotion. When I broke the news that valuable jewellery had been taken, his only reply was a shrug of the shoulders and a request that we should not make so much noise about it.

When he went to his own bedroom he discovered that a very valuable ivory pistol that he always kept loaded by his bedside was missing. This caused him some slight regret, and the following morning I was amazed to see a penknife with the blade open on the table beside him. He remarked that a penknife skilfully handled was better than no weapon at all in case the burglars returned.

One evening after dinner we heard newspaper boys

shouting at the top of their voices, " Double murder ! Horrible scandal !" I sent for a paper and read the account of a terrible tragedy—the husband of a well-known lady in Los Angeles had discovered his wife in the arms of her lover and deliberately shot both the delinquents. We asked if he understood what I had read. He nodded, not looking up from his work, and murmured wearily, " *Tant de bruit pour si peu de chose !*"

Every day extraordinary letters and strange requests came to the bungalow. But of the hundreds that passed through my hands, one I kept as being unusually amusing.

" Los Angeles,
" April 9th, 1920

" Mr. Maeterlinck, Sir,

" I noticed your name in the *Herald* speaking of your loss from burglary and mentioning the fact of your being a Poet and author of poetry. Now this very much interests me, as I have written several poems and it is my delight. I would very much like to meet you and get your opinion on what I have written. Would also like to have you read me some of yours when you come to Los Angeles. Come out and see me. I live on——— Avenue, this is the South part of the Town. I am only green at the business, but would love to have the opinion of someone who did know as to whether there is any merit in them. Come out and see me and stay for dinner and we will have a talk.

" Resp."

Maeterlinck wrote Mr. S—— expressing his regret

at his inability to accept his kind invitation, but assuring him that when he had sufficiently mastered the difficult art of speaking English he hoped to have the privilege of reading some of his verses to him.

At the end of six weeks I telephoned to Goldwyn's studio to say that Maeterlinck's scenario, "The Power of the Dead," was finished. It was, in the opinion of those qualified to judge, one of the most remarkable films that has ever been written. On our arrival at the Goldwyn offices we were shown into a large room and introduced to several people connected with the producing department. Goldwyn himself was not present. We were received by one of his representatives, who sat at a large desk with one leg resting on top of it, the other thrown over the arm of his chair. In this dignified attitude Goldwyn's friend, who to his credit started life, I believe, as a tailor, laid down the laws as to what Maeterlinck should write to appeal to the American public. I read the film, and most of the younger and more intelligent members of the firm thought it was admirable. But the gentleman with his leg on the desk said he was convinced the story was altogether too highbrow for the average American citizen.

I pointed out that the contract did not contain any clause stating that the story was to be submitted first for Goldwyn's approval. Also, that the reason Maeterlinck had been asked to write for the company was the president's desire for something of a higher intellectual quality that might inspire a new era in the cinema world.

The following day we had another interview with the gentleman, who still kept his leg on the desk, and I had the unsatisfactory and ungrateful task of translating and trying to reconcile two mentalities directly opposed to one another. In the end Maurice, who is the best of good fellows, offered to write another story. This time he chose a lighter vein and produced a charming fairy tale called "*Plumes Bleues*" ("Blue Feathers").

Once again I returned to the Goldwyn offices and read the manuscript, with the same result as before. The gentleman maintained that Maeterlinck had not yet come out of the clouds, and that if he wanted his film to succeed he would have to introduce incidents to amuse and excite the public. Our patience was exhausted! For some reason Goldwyn himself did not come to California during the three months we were there, and feeling that there was no reason for wasting time with further discussions, we decided to leave California for the South.

On the return journey we visited Chicago and Detroit. The great French pianist, Cortot, was touring the United States, and when he heard that Maeterlinck was to be entertained at Detroit he very courteously arranged to play for him, not knowing the poet's utter lack of appreciation for music. Cortot surpassed himself on that occasion, and I have never heard him play more magnificently. He is certainly one of the most brilliant pianists in the world, and even the tone deaf ears of Maeterlinck realised that something extraordinary was taking place at the piano. At the end of the performance he was given quite an ovation, and Maeterlinck was

the first to congratulate him, and thanked him profusely for the great compliment paid. As soon as Cortot had left our box he turned to me with the expression of one who has made a great discovery. *"Dis-donc, Henri, Cortot est épatant—il tape plus fort et il va plus vite que toi!"*

It would be impossible for me to relate the names of half the people who showered hospitality on the Maeterlincks. I doubt if any country in the world ever treated a foreigner with more consideration and courtesy. Mr. Anderson, the well-known painter, lent us his spacious apartment during the whole of our sojourn in New York. Mrs. Millihiser placed one of her automobiles entirely at our disposal, and Mrs. Oliver Harriman often allowed us the privilege of lunching quietly at her delightful home. The charm and beauty of this extraordinary woman, added to the brilliancy of her conversation, helped to smooth over some of Maeterlinck's most trying moments. Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Hearst, hearing of the poet's interest in the cinema, arranged a dinner for him, at which were present Mrs. Oliver Belmont and other well-known people. Their huge apartment in Riverside Drive contained a complete equipment for showing moving pictures, and during the evening we were given one of the latest creations of the screen.

We arrived in New York at the beginning of May, secured cabins on one of the French liners, and after farewell lunches and dinners Maeterlinck and his young wife bade good-bye to the United States.

I was staying on my farm when the first bundle of Georgette's indiscretions arrived. I read them trem-

bling with rage; then thought of a study table not far away, where a similar bundle must now be lying. What would be the effect? Within a few hours I was knocking at the entrance of "Les Abeilles." Yes, Monsieur would see me. The gardener smiled as he swung open the heavy gate. I found the master sitting in a sunny corner of the terrace, a pipe between his teeth, a favourite dog by his side, his expression one of infinite calm. I stood before him speechless. "Come, come, my friend, what has happened?" But in that silvery voice I found no invitation to unburden myself. For an hour we chattered about a thousand things. Finally, I broke out—"But Georgette's articles!"

He sighed a little, then smiled. "They mean nothing to me."

"But, Maurice," I protested, "Georgette was not the white lily she paints herself. She was not faithful. She did not help your work." My fury rose with every word. "You have told me her influence was not good for your work, and that it would have been better had some other actress played the rôles she usurped."

He nodded his head wearily. "Yes, that is all true."

"She also claims to have helped you write many of your books."

This taunt stirred my friend. "That is impossible!" There was anger in his voice. "Before I met her I had already written 'La Princesse Maleine,' 'Les Sept Princesses,' 'Pelléas et Mélisande,' 'Alladine et Palomides,' 'Interieur,' 'La Mort de Tintagiles,' 'Les Serres Chaudes,' 'L'

Intruse,' ' Les Aveugles,' ' Le Trésor des Humbles,' " L' Ornement des Noces, Spirituelles' (traduction du Flamand.)."

This prodigious list of work surprised me. Then he continued, his eyes fixed on the soft slope of the hills, " Of course, you understand, I made no claim on the exclusive affections of our friend. I am not entirely blind. You will, for instance, remember K——, a poor actor without talent, but fairly intelligent. At the suggestion and request of Georgette, and more out of pity than any assurance of his ability, I trusted him with the rôle of Lucius Vérus in ' Marie Magdelene ' at Nice, in 1913. I then had complete confidence in Georgette. It was not until long afterwards, through letters which were seized and undeniable witnesses, and even public notoriety—so much had their conduct scandalized Nice, that I discovered that a liaison had existed for many years."

This was no news to me, and my mind turned to Sélysette. " Where and when did you marry ?"

"We were married on the 15th February, 1919, at Châteauneuf de Contes, in the mountains behind us." He was silent for a few moments, and I could see the mind of the man at work.

" There is this," he began thoughtfully, " and does it not apply to all creative artists—they create because they must. There is that in them—something lent them for a little while—which demands expression. Unless this is found they strangle their spirits. The love of women, or the desire for them, never implanted in a man's soul the ability to create. That love will make the process easier—happier—perhaps more complete, but it is an aid and not a

cause. The ability was there first; and, on the other hand, that ability often finds its voice in spite of love which is unfruitful in happiness. Believe me, the man who creates does so at the bidding of his soul, and does not owe that soul to any woman."

It was Sélysette who interrupted our reverie. It was owing to her youthful gaiety, I decided, that Maurice looked younger to-day than he did ten years ago.

Perhaps in no better way can I illustrate the bond that exists between the master and myself than by giving the following letter.

"Château de Médan,
"Médan.

"Mon cher ami,

"Je tiens à vous dire une fois de plus toute ma reconnaissance pour les soins dont vous avez entouré les représentations de mes pièces qui vous ont été confiées. Grâce à vous 'Pelléas,' 'Monna Vanna' et le 'Bourgmestre de Stillemonde' ont été présentées au public dans des conditions telles que je n'en pouvais désirer de meilleures. J'ai appris à cette occasion à apprécier à sa juste valeur, votre goût, votre conscience, vos dons d'artiste et votre amical dévouement. Je suis heureux de vous remercier et vous envoie l'expression de mes sentiment les plus affectueux.

"(Signed) MAETERLINCK."

CHAPTER XII

AUSTRALIA

IT was late afternoon in November, 1923. The day had been spent grappling with the stubborn roots of mountain trees, and, numbed with exhaustion, I rested on a crumbling wall and surveyed my domain. The Mediterranean, two thousand feet below, lay still and colourless, wearing an out-of-season tint of steel-grey shot with mauve. The mountains slept beneath their first blanket of snow, and only the air was alive and tingled with the icy breath of glacial streams. Autumn flowers lay in crumbled heaps in the garden, killed by the first frost of winter, though beneath me in Monte Carlo the grass was green and dotted with flowering shrubs.

Across the sodden ground plodded a servant, an ominous green envelope fluttering in her hand. It was not hard to guess its contents—a summons back to work in another field. In less than a week I called at a Dover Street Club and asked for Madame Melba, who had just arrived in London from Australia.

"I want you to go out there at once," she announced, and proceeded to outline her latest scheme. This was to engage a first-rate company, in which she would sing the principal rôles, for the Antipodes.

She asked me to secure the company and go with them as director. I agreed to the former suggestion, but could not come to a decision about taking the journey myself.

A few weeks later Melba, accompanied by her Australian manager, Mr. Tait, and I met in Naples. We spent several days listening to earnest singers who desperately wanted engagements, but found no desirable voices. Melba, unfortunately, fell ill and returned at once to London, where she underwent a serious operation.

Meanwhile, Mr. Tait and I continued our journey to Milan, where practically the entire company were engaged. It is strange that this manufacturing northern city should be the centre for practically all the singers and chorus men and women of Europe. There is a vast difference between the professional and the more or less amateur chorus which I was later to use in Australia. The former are so trained that after two or three rehearsals they are able to sing in a repertoire of sixty to seventy operas. The great Galleria of Milan is like a whispering gallery, and at the rumour of the presence of a well-known operatic director in the city the chatter about the tables in the cafés grows dense and excited. Singers appear from everywhere to discuss the possibilities of engagement.

Not far away is the office of the principal agent, a man of power and great wealth. His domain is approached by a narrow, dark and dirty staircase, such as one might find in Whitechapel. In the entrance hall sits an unshaven and shabbily dressed man who demands one's business. Grouped against

the wall on rickety chairs are the pathetic figures of out of work singers who spend days in this gloomy den in the hope of being granted an interview with the famous agent. In an inner room is an old-fashioned, out of tune piano. This is seldom used, for it often happens that an artist who makes an excellent impression when singing in a room proves a complete failure on the stage. Directors, therefore, usually make their choice from those whom they can hear in public performances. This makes the engagement of the débutant singer extremely difficult and precarious, as it is only a man of exceptional discernment who can tell the effect which will be produced in a theatre by a voice previously heard only in a room. Famous singers, of course, are privately interviewed and waited upon at their convenience, and, as it may be imagined, all conceivable tact is necessary on such occasions.

After we had engaged our male chorus we had yet to find a singer suitable to share with Melba the principal rôles. Madame Toti Dal Monte, that vivacious dark Neapolitan, was already being hailed by the critics as a promising artist. Her success at La Scala had been brilliant, and the Scala director was not at all anxious to release her. Finally, after much difficulty, and with the friendly help of Toscanini, a satisfactory contract was arranged and signed—just on the eve of a departure for South America. We felt rather uncertain about the engagement of this young Italian, as Melba, owing to illness, had neither seen nor heard her, and we could only hope that her personality would prove acceptable and sympathetic to the elder diva. Happily

nothing could have been more agreeable than the ultimate relations between these two singers, and our fears were quite unjustified.

While we were busy engaging the opera company in Milan, reports of Melba's health from London were most disquieting, and we were filled with anxiety lest she should be unable to go to Australia. However, she was pronounced strong enough in time to make the final arrangements for the tour. It being then necessary to make my own decision, I agreed to act as director of the company. We sailed from Toulon the following October—a strangely assorted group.

When we arrived Melbourne was roasting in a tropical heat, with a north wind blowing that felt like a blast from a furnace. The city seemed a strange mixture of England and the Middle West of America, but gives a sensation of repose which I have seldom felt in any other place of its size. We established headquarters near St. Kilda, a suburb which is to Melbourne what Hampstead is to London.

I had been warned that the Municipal Theatre, which had been engaged for the opera season, was inadequate and antiquated. However, I found it a good sized building, but with no claims to the title of an opera house, and certainly not the equipment which one expects in a first-class home for lyric drama. But the inefficiencies were overcome, and we were given every assistance by Sir George Tallis, the affable managing director.

Our first undertaking was the completion of the chorus. With the hearty co-operation of Mr. Fritz

Hart, the best female voices in Melbourne had been carefully schooled in the operas we were to give. The voices of the girls he chose were beautiful, and they proved to be good workers, loyal and persevering. In three months after our arrival they formed one of the best female choruses I have ever heard.

Three classes of voices form a female chorus—soprano, mezzo-soprano and contralto, and care has to be taken that no section is more dominant than another, as the harmonious whole depends on the perfect balance between all three. In the first place each division is taught its part separately under a chorus master, then the entire combination is rehearsed. When the chorus master has completed his part of the training the conductor is asked to give audition. This usually means a preliminary rehearsal with the piano, and finally with the full orchestra. The stage manager then teaches what is called the mis-en-scéne of each opera, and in a well-organised house the chorus have their final rehearsals in full costume and make-up.

For many reasons it was thought advisable to bring the male chorus from Italy. This gave rise to a violent outburst of indignation from the Australian Trade Unions, and the labour party made it an excuse to re-open a controversy which had recently been raging on the subject of imported foreign labour. The papers were filled with letters of protest. "Empire goods were the best," and one patriotic citizen went so far as to point out that since Australia could produce good cricketers, they could obviously produce good choristers.

A number of Australian singers were brought together and crudely rehearsed, and we were asked to hear them. Melba, without a moment's hesitation, decided that they were not suitable for her requirements. There was not time enough to train them for the thirty-two operas about to be produced, and there was, also, the unsurmountable difficulty of teaching Colonials to sing in two different languages. This opposition and criticism greatly upset Melba, and she felt discouraged at the attitude taken by the public and the press.

Shortly after her arrival in Melbourne she asked me to spend the week-end at Coombe Cottage, her country house at Lillydale. It was a family party with the exception of Mr. Beverley Nichols and myself. Melba's delightful daughter-in-law acted as hostess, and a more charming one could not be wished for, as her delicious sense of humour and her endless good spirits enlivened what might otherwise have been difficult moments. Her husband, George, is a simple but attractive person, and scarcely the sort of man one would expect to find as the son of a prima donna, being devoid of any theatrical instincts and devoting his life to farming, hunting and polo.

Coombe Cottage, a bungalow designed by Dame Nellie herself, is beautifully situated at the foot of Lillydale Hills, overlooking a great expanse of bush. The interior has a decidedly English atmosphere, is well furnished and extremely comfortable. One room is set aside for the souvenirs and presents the diva has received from various princes, emperors and other notables, and these are shown with natural pride to admiring visitors. The place was a delight-

ful haven for weary people, and we spent much of our time sitting on the lawn listening to Melba's voice on the gramophone.

If Melbourne and the surrounding country has a curse, it is surely that of flies. In all my travels I have never met anything so devilish and punishing. To an ordinary European Australia's pestilence is almost incredible. These flies come not singly, nor in hundreds, but literally in hundreds of thousands. They take one's breath away, and it is impossible and even dangerous to open one's mouth in their midst. Although to all appearances they resemble the European pest, they seem to possess a quality of stickiness which I have never known in any other country. However fast one flicks them away from nose and eyes, they gather again Such is the affliction, that nearly everybody wears fly nets, looking exactly like great green insects themselves.

One Sunday afternoon Melba caused considerable consternation by imprudently lifting her net and swallowing a fly. To everyone present the occurrence was ominous, and we all buzzed frantically about her, shouting advice through our helmets, while she coughed in the most alarming way. The offending insect was finally removed, and we subsided back into our chairs, hot, exhausted, but tremendously relieved.

On the following Monday morning we motored back to Melbourne. Melba had an appointment with Oscar Ashe at the Theatre Royal to see the costumes he had designed for Desdemona in his production of "Othello." As she was getting out of the car she caught her fingers in the door, hurting herself so badly that she nearly fainted. Luckily the

portly figure of Ashe arrived in time to catch her in his arms. It looked exactly like an outdoor rehearsal of " Othello " and Melba, who is not devoid of a sense of humour, whispered in my ear, " This will be a good advertisement for the opera, Henry. Go and telephone it to the newspapers at once."

The season opened in March with a performance of " La Bohème," and the event caused a great deal of excitement in Melbourne. The audience was composed of the most representative people in Australia. Melba sang Mimi, and she gave an excellent performance. Although the upper register of her voice has naturally suffered from the enemy no mortal can resist, the beauty of her medium notes compensates in great measure for the loss of the high ones. It will always seem to me a pity that hundreds of young people who heard Melba during that season should have been born too late to hear a great voice in its full perfection.

As to our audiences, and considering how small an opportunity the folk of Australia have to hear good opera, their appreciation was admirable. Our performances were crowded night after night, and we proved that as a matter of percentage the proportion of opera goers is higher in Melbourne than in either London or New York. The Governor-General and Lady Forster, who were frequently present, take an enthusiastic interest in the musical development of Australia. Lord Forster has a very keen appreciation of Wagner, and I have seen him sit for hours listening to the "Meistersinger" being played at the Federal Government House.

During my visit to Melbourne I met many friends

LADY MARJORIE MANNERS
From a drawing by the Duchess of Rutland

of the Old World. Lady Forbes-Robertson, accompanied by her daughter, was having an exceptionally succes sfulseason. Sir Johnston, unfortunately, was not with her. The retirement of this great actor has been an irreparable loss to the stage, and it is doubtful whether the present generation will ever hear such a mellow speaking voice and so perfect a diction as was his.

One is often told that celebrated actresses are not generous to beginners. If there is any truth in this statement, Lady Forbes-Robertson is certainly an exception. I know one young actress to whom she was extraordinarily kind when in Australia, and who assured me that Lady Forbes-Robertson spared no pains in teaching her rôles and in smoothing out the difficulties with which beginners have to contend. Lady Forbes-Robertson's generosity of spirit is not only confined to her own comrades, as often at the end of a fatiguing performance she would return to the hotel and arrange an elaborate supper in order to make the members of the opera company feel that somebody was looking after their comfort. It is difficult for people to realise how lonely Italians become in a country where language and customs are entirely new to them. Lady Forbes-Robertson understood this, and made her flat a second home to which all the singers were welcomed from time to time.

As to Jean Forbes-Robertson, the entire chorus fell in love with her, which was not surprising, for she is not only pretty and attractive, but in addition to her talent for the stage she has musical gifts of no mean order, and her playing of the Hawaiian guitar used to delight the homesick foreigners.

Prince Obolensky, a member of the opera company, was another person who livened what might have been many tedious hours with his irrepressible good-nature and wit. He and his wife were victims of the Revolution, being suddenly flung from their great estates into abject poverty. I lived with them for several months in Paris, and saw with what remarkable cheerfulness, courage and dignity they resigned themselves to a tragic situation. Their five beautiful and attractive children received every possible care and loving attention. The Princess started a dressmaking establishment in Paris, and used to rise very early every morning, and, after superintending her household duties, set out in all winds and weather, travelling second-class in the Metro to attend to her shop.

Thanks to the untiring kindness of Violet, Duchess of Rutland, the Obolensky family were able to keep their heads above water. The Duchess applied herself to the task of helping this family with unflagging devotion. I met her many years ago, when she was Lady Granby, the most beautiful and cultured woman of her age. Her daughter, Lady Marjorie Manners, now Lady Anglesey, was a pupil of mine and one of the most charming amateur singers in London. Her sister, Lady Diana Cooper, is well-known for her artistic activities. The entire family, in fact, has always been conspicuous in the sphere of art.

I gave Obolensky daily lessons for months, and later he sang at many drawing-room concerts in Paris with gratifying success. He was always anxious to help his compatriots, and shared with them any good fortune that came his way.

One of his most intimate friends was Count Michel Tolstoi, eldest son of the great novelist. Like nearly all Russians, he has an inherent musical instinct and sang the gipsy songs of his country with extraordinary charm. Obolensky told me that he was in need of money, and we decided to make up a quintette of Russian refugees composed of Prince Obolensky, Count Michel Tolstoi, Prince Putatin, brother-in-law to the Grand Duchess Marie, his wife, and a young officer whose name I forget. They gave the Russian folk songs, accompanying themselves on various stringed instruments. The effect was most attractive, and they received many engagements to play in drawing-rooms in Paris.

Their reputation and success once reached the ears of an American hostess who was anxious to establish herself in the metropolis of art. She wrote me, asking if I would arrange an evening at the Ritz Hotel for her, and to quote the terms of the Russian quintette. I called on her the next day and gave her the names of the performers. After hearing the list, her expression showed obvious disappointment. "I certainly imagined that for such a big fee you would have included a Grand Duchess," she exclaimed. I told her that I was not acquainted with any Grand Duchess who sang. "But I don't care whether she can sing or not. Ask the Grand Duchess Marie what she would charge to come to my concert," she replied. When I refused this request the answer was curt.—I was told to consider the engagement cancelled.

Sir Charles Mendl, whose musical evenings are always a source of delight to Parisians, and who is

himself a singer of no ordinary attainments, was most helpful to the Russian group. The Duchess d'Uzes, too, became one of their enthusiastic supporters. I believe she was herself of Cossack origin, and is certainly one of the most remarkable personalities in Paris. She possesses the gift of becoming the centre of admiration the moment she enters a room. She was a pupil and devoted friend of Jean de Reszke, who often told me that had she been a poor woman she would easily have made a great reputation as a singer.

It was at her house one night that I overheard a rather amusing conversation between one of the Grand Dukes and a lady with whom he was enamoured. The conversation turned on wine, and the lady was asked by the Grand Duke what brand of champagne she preferred. Looking at him with adoring eyes, she replied, " Brut Imperial, Monseigneur !"

Obolensky and I had many cheerful experiences together. One I remember with mingled feelings was a visit to Mr. Otto Kahn, at Taplow Court, which he had leased from Lord Desborough. Mr. Kahn telegraphed to my farm, asking me to bring Obolensky to Taplow at once. With his usual kindness, he was planning to give Obolensky financial assistance. Obolensky met me in Paris and we travelled to London together. We arrived late at night, both of us dirty, unshaven and of disreputable appearance. Obolensky had received the telegram of invitation just as he was about to take his children to the seaside, and took time only to snatch up what he believed to be a small bag containing toilet

necessaries. We were met at the station by an imposing Rolls Royce, and a footman offered to relieve us of our baggage ; an entirely unnecessary proceeding ! We already felt considerably abashed, but when the front door at Taplow Court was thrown open by a portly butler and two liveried footmen hastened forward to take our bags we felt more than uncomfortable. There was a look of suspicion in their eyes at the unexpected appearance of these two tramps, and, with much hesitation, they asked whether we desired to change for dinner ! I had, fortunately, brought clothes, but Obolensky after some hesitation told the butler that he feared there was no change of raiment in his bag, which measured exactly twenty inches by ten. The butler insisted on taking our slim luggage to our rooms and the climax was reached when he opened Obolensky's travelling equipment and found that it contained some fishing tackle, a Teddy bear and a few children's broken toys. He was a most popular member of our Australian company and everyone was delighted with the rich, mellow quality of his voice.

The advent of opera to the Antipodes caused a great deal of discussion as to whether the country was prepared to support a permanent operatic institution. I had written several letters on the subject to the newspapers, and this resulted in an invitation to lunch at the Rotary Club to meet some prominent men of the city. After lunch I was asked to speak for twenty minutes or so, being assured that the press was not present. I chose as my subject the importance of opera and music in the culture of a nation, and frankly lamented the predominance of

musical comedy in Australia and other English speaking countries, referring to musical comedy as a prostitution of art.

That evening, completely unconscious that I had said anything unusual, when I arrived at His Majesty's Theatre I was met with furious glances from everyone. Even the office boys glowered. On inquiring what was wrong, the *Evening Herald* was thrust into my hand and, to my amazement, I read the following headlines : " Russell Attacks the Morality of Our Chorus Girls."

Two things had occurred—a newspaper reporter *had* been present at the Rotary Club lunch, and my remark about the prostitution of art had been distorted by this misguided but evidently highly moral man into a reflection on the chastity of the ladies in musical comedy.

The sensation caused by this mis-interpretation of my speech was as great as any political upheaval. Meetings of protest were held, and some of the irate musical comedy performers wanted to have me deported. But a notable ecclesiastic, being no less than the Archbishop of Melbourne, came to my support, and Sir John Monash, one of Australia's most electrifying personalities, who was fortunately present when I spoke, declared that not one word of my speech reflected on the morality of the stage.

The papers and public, however, continued to interest themselves until a new excitement in the shape of a shooting outrage presented itself, and the matter of the private life of the chorus was immediately forgotten.

This attack came from an unexpected quarter, as

we had all been impressed by the courtesy and intelligence of Australian newspaper men. The reporters were considerate, while the musical critics showed an unusual spirit of fairness and knowledge of the subject.

Mr. Keith Murdoch, the brilliant young editor of the *Herald* extended hospitality and unlimited kindness to the entire opera company, and greatly added to our happiness. The clouds had blown over by May, when the company was broken up and I sailed for England. The return journey was uneventful except for the meeting of an unforgettable character, Mr. Ernest Watt of Sydney. He proved the life and soul of the boat, and everyone was attracted by his fascinating appearance. His dreamy, vague manner caused much amusement. I understood from those who knew him that his popularity in Australia was immense. In Sydney his vagueness is a by-word, and the story is told of how he invited a large party to dinner at his house and only remembered its existence in time to return home just as the guests were leaving.

We said good-bye to Australia with varied impressions of a high-spirited competent people whose courage was as great as the vast country they inhabited.

CHAPTER XIII

RIVIERA

IT will always be a matter of astonishment to me that so many travellers go to the Riviera—and see only the Riviera. True it is that the Côte d'Azur stretches in one long dream of beauty, fretted by a sapphire sea ; but behind and paralleling it is another territory of equal charm and invitation.

One may see both ways from the hills behind Cannes. Southward lie the Rochers Rouges, where wind-twisted cypress march to the water's edge, driving their knotted roots between great rocks that are blood red at the going down of the sun ; the folded hills of the Esterel with their dark blanket of pine ; St. Raphael ; Agay ; and all the lovely coast by Beaulieu, Nice, Monte Carlo, Mentone, and so into the long curve that turns down towards Genoa. Here are castles and palaces ; here the art of man has dealt royally with the opulence of nature, and here there is little left to be done.

But northward, and ere one reaches the snow-capped peaks that fill the horizon, is another land. It is simpler, more untouched, a land of rivers milky from hidden glaciers, of ancient villages perched tottering on crag tops to defy the once marauding Saracen, of wayside inns, of wonderful roads that wind through booming gorges and shoot

out into the sunlight, of many shrines where the calm Christ smiles amongst the grey green of the tilted olive orchards, cold churches where lie the powdery bones of forgotten prelates, of hamlets that nestle in a wrinkle of the hills, and, over all, a great silence, save for the voice of babbling waters.

Draguignan—you may go in by way of Frejus and Draguignan—on to St. Julien and Castellane, and thus to the Valley of the Var. You will tarry a while at Entrevaux, that coquettish town with the drawbridge that is never drawn and its intimate reminders of an historic past. You will, if you are wise, stop frequently on your journey and talk, for in this region folk have time to talk, have nothing to sell you, and spend not their lives in pursuit of the elusive franc. You may subsist on a fraction of what it will cost you forty miles farther south. You will find good roads, wonderful air, and the nameless something marking a population dignified, fearless and not a little proud. You will see marvels of engineering, as at the Gorge du Loup. You will not put on evening dress for dinner—but the dinner will meet your criticism. And this is the country of the Basses Alpes.

It is during the summer months, when the followers of fashion have fled back to Paris and London, that the territory they occupied along the coast regains its normal, and to me most charming, character. The swift, purring motors that by day and night raced along the Grande Corniche are replaced by the rumbling of peasants' carts. Humble folk journey from the provinces to make holiday in pensions, the grand shops are shuttered, the hotels

deserted—but a million flowers are in bloom, and the days are richly endowed with sunlight and cool breezes.

My farm lies like an outpost of the Basses Alpes, perilously clinging to the rocks above La Turbie. Nearly two thousand feet below lies Monte Carlo ; and from the edge of my garden looking down it is an exquisite town which might have been designed for Titania herself and built by fairy hands. Maeterlinck once described it as " the furoncle de la France," but how serene and beautiful it seems from above. In the mountains one may live as a recluse, provided that only a mule track leads to one's door. This excludes the high-powered cars that nowadays penetrate the very heart of the rugged hills bringing with them the essence of luxury and sophistication.

Spring comes to the mountains a month later than to the plains, and while the gardens are gay in Monte Carlo ours above are still in small bud. Not once a year does this renaissance occur, but twice ; and it is hard to say whether the roses are more lovely in May, after the chill winter winds, or those that follow the heavy rains of autumn. The climate in temperature is like England, and there one can raise the most succulent of garden fruits which ripen to perfection in the strong sun.

Gradually people are beginning to realise that the Riviera is something more than a sunny strip of land bordered by hotels and casinos, and more visitors stay into the summer. It is then that one may take off one's smile, rest and explore the fascinating regions that lie behind the modern towns.

It is on the Riviera that one hears more well-known names than anywhere else on earth ; for there society,

and a group of artistic and political celebrities form the inner nucleus about which the rich man and his wife revolve in herds. It is no wonder that gossip, tittle-tattle and scandal mingle with the very breezes. In a city these tales would be lost and on the moors be out of place, but here in lovely gardens and on gracious terraces they fill the air with the sickening scent of stale perfume.

What schemes are born, what plans laid during the early spring months, for it is only the small brain that can ever really rest and do nothing. I remember particularly an idea that saw light one winter. For many years I had longed to build an open air theatre, and for some time watched with covetous eyes a part of the hillside beside my farm which nature herself had designed for an auditorium. Lady Rothermere, chatelaine of the delightful "Villa La Dragonnière" (originally built by Mr. and Mrs. Williamson, the novelists) was most enthusiastic about this vision, and together we discussed the possibilities of creating a theatre to which could be brought the operatic and dramatic talent of France. I believed that it would be best to confine our efforts to opera, but she, in her overwhelming eagerness, wished to emphasize the literary and purely dramatic side. In connection with the theatre we proposed to build a number of small cottages where students of talent could be lodged free of cost while they completed their studies. The idea was based somewhat on the principle of the Grand Prix de Rome, the wonderful institution which has stimulated such men as Gounod, Debussy and many others.

An architect was chosen—a small group met one day on the rocky hillside known as the Col de Guerre, and the site for the first artist's cottage was chosen. The plans were laid and the first cottage commenced. From my terrace the only building I can see is this solitary little house, with its picturesque red tiled roof and wide veranda, standing empty and abandoned, a sad memorial to a scheme destined never to be materialized. Everything at the time seemed most hopeful, and I believed that Lady Rothermere, backed by the power of the *Daily Mail* and its proprietors, would be able to float this artistic enterprise without the slightest difficulty. However, the matter fell through and the mountain echoes have not been awakened by the music of great voices or of a great orchestra.

Not very far away from my farm lived James Gordon Bennett, the editor of the *New York Herald*. I first met him in America, and we often crossed the Atlantic together. His was, indeed, a unique personality—tall, of powerful build, stern features, rugged complexion, piercingly shrewd eyes, kindly and courteous to his friends, but when roused extraordinarily blunt and outspoken—a giant both in physique and ability. In his activities as a journalist he was single-minded, fearless and absolutely unselfish. His employees all spoke of him in terms of loyalty and affection. The policy of the *New York Herald* was entirely dictated by him. A favourite and autocratic habit was his use of certain blue envelopes, which were addressed to the editor in a lithograph of his own hand-writing. It

was understood at the Paris office that whatever was enclosed in them was to be inserted in the *Herald*. One day, much to my surprise, I was presented with a dozen of these envelopes with the instructions to use them in sending any musical news which I thought would be of interest to the paper.

His villa at Beaulieu, built near the railway lines, was not prepossessing from the outside, and distinctly ugly within. Bennett was far too independent in character to be a snob, and his hospitality was entirely confined to the people he liked, but his parties were always amusing. Above all things he objected to any form of affectation and never hesitated to express himself emphatically on all subjects.

I remember a luncheon party at his villa when the guests included the vivacious and ever young Mrs. Ronnie Greville, Mrs. Leeds (afterwards the wife of Prince Christopher of Greece), Tony Drexel, Mrs. Hickox, Ralph Curtis and the Machettas. The latter had for many years been intimate friends of Bennett, and it was they who supplied the social columns of the *Herald* with news of the Riviera. Machetta, an Italian by birth, was devoted to music, and after lunch asked me to play. The upright piano, which stood in a corner of the dining-room, was a wretched and broken-down affair, and I protested vehemently, but the company insisted. Bennett frankly disliked music, and was not afraid to say so. I got half way through the overture to the "Meistersinger" when he rose from his chair and shouted, "For God's sake stop that noise, Russell! Nobody here, except Machetta, knows or cares anything about music, and we are only listening to be

polite. Strike up the Soldiers' Chorus and we wil-all join in." I played the popular march from "Faust," and our host took up the refrain in a lusty voice, singing, "Now, boys, let us get drunk to-night." This was characteristic of the man, and he probably knew it would have the effect of stopping further requests for music. He was right, and the guests one by one rose to take their departure. He whispered in my ear not to go, and we went together to his study.

Bennett was devoted to France and the Allies, and from the moment the war started he threw himself whole-heartedly into a powerful anti-German campaign. This, I believe, cost him and the *Herald* a large fortune, as before America entered the War hundreds of German firms in the United States had advertised in the paper, and these he refused after war had been declared.

Bennett was every inch a man, and, as is often the case in very manly men, there was a childish and humorous side to his nature.

"Russell," he said, with a twinkle in his eye, "don't you think German is the ugliest language in the world?" I nodded. "Couldn't you write me an article for the *Herald*," he continued, "saying that the reason why the Germans have such ugly voices is because their language is unfit for human ears?"

I told him that while I agreed with him in principle, it would be difficult to make a sweeping statement, which, artistically speaking, would not be true, and explained that German opera sounded much better when sung in German than in any other language.

He was much too prejudiced and far too indifferent to the artistic side to show any tolerance in the matter. As I knew argument would be futile, I promised to think over his suggestion and prepare something for the *Herald*.

" As a matter of fact," he said, " I don't see why you could not write a series of articles about your experiences in the operatic world. Personally I don't care about memoirs, but the public is always ready to eat them up, providing they are well-seasoned with society scandals."

I had nothing particular to do at the time, and agreed to attempt this new job, but explained that I knew nothing about writing and asked for advice as to how to proceed. Some of his hints were so instructive that I think they are worth producing.

" Write simply and unpretentiously," he advised me. Don't use many words to express few thoughts. Don't be a highbrow."

I asked what he meant by a " highbrow."

" I mean not to write too much about art or indulge in too much musical criticism."

" But," I ventured, " don't you think a large section of the American public is interested in musical criticism ?"

" My experience is that the only people who read the critics with avidity are artists who are jealous of each other," he replied. " In any case, most musical critics are men or women who began their lives as artists, and only resorted to criticism as a means of livelihood after they had failed in every other direction."

I knew that Bennett's policy in the *Herald* had

been to eliminate the musical critic, and protested against this wholesale condemnation. "Surely a brilliant writer like Philip Hale of Boston is helpful in developing public judgment, and Ernest Newman's literary gifts and amazing knowledge have helped the musical world in England more than anything else in the last fifty years."

Bennett showed signs of impatience. "You are like all people who ask for advice. You only want to hear what agrees with your own views. If you care to write me some bright breezy stories about the inner lives of public people, I will publish them in a Sunday edition of the *Herald*.

"But," I demurred, "some of the stories might be considered libellous."

Bennett jumped out of his chair and exclaimed, "There is no such thing as libel in America. Nobody with any sense ever notices what our newspapers say. The average American journalist aims at amusing and interesting the public. Glaring headlines appear about the private doings of a public man. They may be quite incorrect—they mostly are! But if he thinks it worth while contradicting (which he seldom does) his contradiction is carefully hidden in a corner of the newspaper which nobody reads."

This was said in a laughing manner, and I left him with the assurance that I would do my best to dig up some memoirs which would meet with his approval. I did not see him again for some considerable time, and at our next interview noticed a decided change in his appearance. Although he was still a marvellous man for his age, it was evident that he was breaking up. I saw him again a few days before

he died. Even then he was in the best of spirits, and said cheerily, " This is all borrowed time, Russell. I have been given my through ticket for the next world, and I shall not return." We all felt his loss very keenly. There was no figure on the Riviera more deeply regretted than that of James Gordon Bennett.

Among the most beautiful villas on the Riviera is Villa Sylvia, which belongs to Mrs. Ralph Curtis and is named after her daughter. The house, built of blue-green tiles and yellow stone was the first of the pioneer properties of St. Jean, Cap Ferrat, old King Leopold of Belgium being the next to buy land on this delectable peninsula. The house itself is rendered more beautiful by its surrounding gardens, which are practically unchallenged by any others on the coast. Their charm is due not to any extraordinary or conventional design, but to a marvellous simplicity and absence of effort giving them the gracious aspect of English fields in May. Ralph Curtis's father, Daniel Curtis, was a celebrated wit in Boston. Nearly fifty years ago he brought his sons to live in France, and it was thus that Ralph studied painting with John Sargent and Julian Storey. His work soon ranked very high and if, like Sir William Eden, he had not enjoyed independent means, he would probably have become as famous amongst professionals as he was among amateurs. His wife is a painter of great ability ; but also something rarer than this—an artist in life, and her every action bears the stamp of perfect taste. Ralph Curtis was a man of many parts and in addition to his talent as a painter wrote amusingly and was an exceptionally witty conversationalist.

He was an epicurian, too, of the finest order and understood good food and good wine. His chef, who has lived for twenty years at Villa Sylvia, is another artist and worthy of the beautiful surroundings in which he works.

Another villa at Beaulieu particularly dear to the heart of every Englishman was the Villa Baird, presided over by Lady Eva Wemyss. Alas! she no longer occupies it, as the owner has taken possession again. Lady Eva during the many years she lived in the house managed to impart to it that peculiar quality of simplicity and unpretentious comfort which one usually associates with English country houses; and, indeed, once inside these gates one had the illusion of being transferred to an English country house on a fine summer's day. Of Lady Eva herself it can only be said that she is all heart, all sympathy, all kindness and understanding. Her manners invite affection and compel esteem. Her expressive eyes literally sparkle with human kindness and her generosity is such that it is a wonder she has a penny left in the world.

The only other woman I know who has an equal amount of sympathy is her aunt, Evelyn, Duchess of Wellington. This extraordinary lady has converted physical suffering into a rare and perfect mode of self-expression. She is, indeed, a saint, and the halo one sees around her is not an imaginary one. It is very unusual to find good musicians or talented singers among English amateurs. But the Duchess was a brilliant exception to the rule, and possessed a pure soprano voice, which she used intelligently and with musical understanding. I had not the privilege

of hearing her in her youth, nor even in her middle age, a fact which proves how remarkable her singing must have been. As recently as seven years ago she sang for me the entire rôle of Marguerite in "Faust," and her voice showed no sign of fatigue at the end of the opera.

Many hostesses on the Riviera have classical music played during their parties, a custom that is dying out elsewhere. The problem how to make a party a success nowadays grows greater and the solutions more extravagant every year. One has to face the fact that the craze for dancing is so wide that the majority of people think no higher than their feet, and any form of entertainment which does not include a jazz band has little or no attraction for the younger generation.

I think perhaps the best way of having good music without boring the guests was discovered by Lady Michelham. When she occupied the imposing Villa Isola Bella, near Cannes (once the property of the late Baron Von André), she used to divide her friends into two distinct groups—those who really liked music and those who did not. She would invite music lovers to listen to an excellent programme from ten o'clock till eleven, and those who cared nothing about music were invited from half past eleven onwards to dance. In this way both tastes were gratified, neither bored with the other, and it is a pity that other hostesses do not emulate Lady Michelham. What a curious personality she had! Full of vitality, always active—and yet a victim of unusually bad health, though she appeared as one who had never had a day's illness.

The Villa Beau Désert, which belonged to Sir Edward Hulton, was a gathering place for an interesting coterie. Lady Hawtrey, the ever young widow of England's most delightful actor, Sir Charles Hawtrey, was among the guests. She, I think, may be classed as one of nature's most mysterious phenomena. She retains the figure of a woman of thirty and entertains her friends with so much vitality that even the youngest members of her parties are obliged to make an effort to keep pace with their hostess. There is something in Elsie Hawtrey's spirits which is positively infectious, and I think that if her house were set on fire by her worst enemy, she would still receive him with a peal of laughter. The winter season in Monte Carlo would be incomplete without her presence. When members of the Sporting Club have lost heavily at the tables, I believe the only thing that keeps them from committing suicide is a sight of her smiling countenance and the sound of her sympathetic laugh.

The death of Jean de Reszke has deprived the Riviera of one of its most attractive and fascinating personalities. For several years he and his distinguished and beautiful wife had lived in Nice at the Villa Viergemere. Jean was a host of unrivalled hospitality, and the villa had the most delightful and sympathetic atmosphere.

It was at one of Lady Ripon's parties at Coombe that I first met Jean and Edouard de Reszke. Considering the great popularity they had attained in London, they were the most unspoilt and unpretentious of singers, and had none of the characteristics that so often make the successful artist a bore. I

remember one party when they amused themselves, and everyone else, by singing the popular jazz songs of the day. Never was jazz rendered so admirably.

Edouard de Reszke was a tall and heavily built man, with a countenance that beamed with good-nature and a tongue that was never known to utter an unkind word. He had a remarkable bass voice—perhaps one of the finest organs of its kind in the world. Considered as an instrument, it was more phenomenal than that of his elder brother. On the other hand, Jean was undoubtedly the greater artist of the two, and far too intelligent not to be conscious of his own superiority. Their devotion to each other was touching, and during their careers they were scarcely ever separated. Jean rarely sang without his brother. The great tenor used often to tease Edouard about the superiority of his voice, and I remember once his saying, laughingly, " If you could give me a little of your voice and I could give you a little of my art, we should both be better off." He was fully justified in making this remark, for he was certainly the greatest romantic tenor of his time.

Goethe says, " It is by working within limits that the master reveals himself," and the limitation, the very condition of any art is its style. Jean de Reszke, more than any other singer of his time, was a master of style, and I can think of no tenor, either past or present, who can compare with him in this respect. Without style there is no school, and there can be no real school without style. Jean possessed every attribute essential to a great singer—except a great

voice. He had faultless diction, exquisite phrasing, perfect intonation and a strangely fascinating timbre. It was not an organ of exceptional volume or very extensive range, but he used it with intelligence and controlled it to perfection. His presence on the stage appealed to the eye and to the imagination. Here were charm, distinction and elegance of person united to musical understanding and dramatic instinct. His Romeo, Lohengrin and Tristan must ever remain among the great memories of the operatic stage.

As a man he was less well known than the majority of great singers, and during his career kept himself very much to himself. He seldom accepted invitations, but when he retired from the stage and became a teacher, his friends saw more of him, and few masters have inspired such affection and esteem in their pupils. One found in his private life the same magnetic charm which made his presence on the stage irresistible. He told a story extraordinarily well and his power of imitation was quite unique. Speaking several languages, his accent in each one was so perfect that it was difficult to tell his nationality. We always conversed in Italian, and sometimes during lunch he would imitate some well-known defect in a celebrated Italian singer with such ability that none of us could finish our meal for laughing. If this lover of practical joking had ever, as he once intended, published his memoirs, they would have contained a thousand tricks played on other singers.

I believe the last party he ever gave was on the 8th March, 1925. It was an exquisite hour that every-

one passed at Villa Viergemere that Sunday afternoon. Jean had paid a delicate and well-deserved compliment to Reynaldo Hahn, and organised with admirable judgment a programme exclusively devoted to that gifted composer's compositions. Nineteen of Jean's pupils took part in various solos and choruses. One rarely hears nowadays a more perfect *ensemble*, a more finished and intelligent interpretation than these young people gave under the magnetic baton of the composer himself.

There are sides to Hahn's personality which are only known to those who have an intimate acquaintance with him. A true artist, and such he certainly is, reveals himself so perfectly in his work that, as a rule, one does not seek to know the man. But with Hahn it is different. And those few people who have known him in the intimacy of the salon and experienced the charm and delight of his singing have realised that he interprets as well as he composes. At the piano he can hold his listeners until the " dark shadows of night take on the violet tinge of dawn," and even then no thought of sleep or weariness breaks the spell. It was good to see Jean and Reynaldo Hahn hand in hand ; these were two great charmers and subtle personalities ; men to whom we are infinitely indebted and of whom we have more and still more need.

Perhaps many people felt that this would be the last opportunity of greeting their beloved Jean, for in less than a month from that date we heard that he was dead. Contrary to a statement published lately, his funeral was worthy in every respect of the greatness of his fame. A paragraph which appeared

recently stated that " very few people went to Jean's funeral." The person who wrote this further declared that " It seemed strange that a spirit which had at one time held the whole world enthralled should be going almost unmourned to its final resting place." These statements conflict strangely with what actually happened, and it is unfortunate that the impression should be given that the world was indifferent to the passing of one of its greatest artistic figures.

Notre Dame Cathedral, where the requiem mass was sung, was more than filled by reverent and sorrowing mourners, and many were forced to stand outside the church. Musicians, well-known artists and lovers of music and representatives of many Governments were gathered together. The King and Queen of England were represented by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, Scandinavia by the Prince William of Sweden. The ex-King Manoel of Portugal also attended.

The coffin was hidden by a pall of violets given by the master's pupils and surrounded by a mass of exquisite flowers. The Dies Irae was chanted by one of the choir masters, and the service expressed by the beauty and depth of its rendering the emotion of everyone present.

How many great singers have passed away during the last twenty-five years ! And who is there to-day who can take the place of three such great voca giants as Jean de Reszke, Tamagno and Caruso ? To these three names I could add a string of others—but it would serve no purpose. Everyone who is interested in the art of singing must perceive that its

really great exponents are no longer in our midst. It is not my purpose to try and diminish the value of singers at present before the public, nor do I regret the disappearance of the star singer. What is most to be deplored is the general depreciation and low standard of *bel canto* and good diction. I used to have many conversations with Jean on this subject and cannot resist the temptation of reproducing some of the observations he made. I asked him whether he considered operatic production of to-day equal to that of fifty years ago.

" Well," he answered thoughtfully, " we certainly have better scenery, better costumes and better lighting. There is more intelligence shown in stage direction and more regard for ' *ensemble.*' There is a tendency to eliminate the star system and to suppress the old-fashioned prima donna, whose one ambition is to surround herself by mediocrities in order that she alone may monopolize the admiration of the public. On the other hand, it is quite certain that the standard of singing is not as high as it was forty years ago. The art of *bel canto* is disappearing slowly but surely, and there are scarcely ten singers in the entire world to-day who can be rated as first-class, and very few of these possess voices comparable to the great ones of my day.

" The decadence of the art of singing is due, to a certain degree, to the influence of the modern form of opera or lyric-drama, which calls less for vocalists than for intelligent interpretation. In works like ' Pelléas,' ' Salomé,' etc., gesture and diction are of greater importance than actual singing. Gifted artists like Mary Garden and Chaliapin owe their

reputations more to the genius of interpretation than to the lusciousness of their voices.

"But there is another reason why we have fewer great singers than we had—the greed of gain. Milan is the operatic centre of the world. Singers of all nationalities gather there in the hope of finding an engagement. The city is crowded with agents who for certain considerations procure them contracts. If a young and promising voice makes its appearance, these agents pursue it like hounds after a fox. And as the unknown singer is sure to be poor, the offers of the agents are sure to be tempting. The newcomer is persuaded to sign a contract, and then the usury begins. As a large share of the singer's earnings are henceforth to pass into the hands of the agent, he exploits and pushes the client regardless of whether his or her voice is ready to stand the strain of hard work. The aim of both singer and agent is not the highest artistic results, but the quickest commercial returns! The get-rich-quick principle has eaten into the life of the artist, just as it is eating into the life of everything else.

"The value of a singer is more often quoted in terms of dollars and cents than in terms of artistic appreciation. The public is so fascinated by the stories of fabulous sums earned by Madame Galli-Curci that it forgives her for occasionally singing out of tune. And yet such is the power of publicity in the present century that a mediocre singer can be advertised and boomed into a degree of prominence wholly out of proportion to her legitimate claims. No, my friend, we must persuade singers of to-day to stop advertising themselves as money

making machines. They will attain greatness through the perfection of their art and the culture of their song, and not through the placards of the printer or the puerilities of the press agent."

My own experiences have demonstrated how true were his words.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FUTURE OF OPERA AND SINGING

INTERNATIONAL opera means for us, not a whole winter of festivities such as the endless wealth of New York commands—even in the palmy Edwardian times London society never rose to that—but a couple of glittering summer months when the great singers of the world are free to come (at a price) to Covent Garden.

"The problem in Great Britain is that the expense of great singers is gigantic, and that all the other costs of opera have vastly increased since 1914, while Covent Garden is not a capacious theatre as opera houses go, and Londoners still regard the old prices for stalls and boxes as quite enough, if not too much.

"National can never compete with international opera. The foreign schools of composers and singers are the fruit of costly cultivation. For generation after generation money has been lavished on the great continental opera houses by monarchs, States, and municipalities, and bankrupt European countries to-day are still handsomely endowing these productions. That is not the English way.

"The paradox is that opera has never become a native of the British Isles, and yet the need of it is felt as a factor of civilisation. We cannot dispense

with opera, when three of the world's greatest men—Mozart, Verdi and Wagner—as well as dozens of the next rank, have poured their inspiration into that form. It is necessary to our musical life. For the forming of first-rate singers opera is essential, and it is one of the greatest incitements for the creative musician."

Mr. Richard Capell, the author of these paragraphs in a London paper, has hit the nail on the head. If opera is really to become a part of the national life of England, it is imperative to increase the ever-dwindling number of first-class singers.

However much we may be accused of magnifying the qualities of the past, it is an undeniable fact that there were far more gifted singers fifty years ago than there are to-day.

I remember when Wagner was blamed for the decline in the art of singing. It was contended that it was his orchestration that made singers force their voices, and that operas like "Tristan" and the "Meistersinger" called more for declamation than vocalisation; yet how wonderful it would be to hear once more the quintet of the "Meistersinger" interpreted by such artists as Jean and Edouard de Reszke and Sembrich. These singers were each great exponents of their art, and although Jean devoted the last years of his career to the interpretation of Wagner's masterpieces, his worst enemy would not dare to say that he ever forced his voice.

Undoubtedly the tendency of modern lyric drama is to make the voice of secondary importance. If, therefore, singers are to be encouraged in the art of *bel canto,* opera houses must retain in their reper-

toire some of the earlier classics, which call for purely vocal interpretation.

The question to be considered is whether the modern artists are inferior to those who have passed, and, if so, in what respects. It is answered by the playing of gramophone records of the famous singers of thirty years ago. To quote only one instance, what singer is there before the public to-day, whose voice and diction can compare favourably with that of Pol Plançon? And yet it is not more than twenty years since this great bass was in the height of his career. It is quite worth while to examine the distinguishing features of his art. He, of course, possessed a beautiful natural organ, although not in any sense a phenomenal voice; the entire two octaves were even; each note was rounded off like a clean-cut sovereign fresh from the mint; the sound was as steady as the bow of a perfect 'cellist; the diction was clear and crisp, every vowel sound and every consonant receiving its proper value; and yet when a legato phrase had to be uttered there was never a hiatus between one note and another, nor any upward apportamento, confusing the intervals and marring the perfection of the whole.

Plançon attached great importance to the art of deep breathing, and with justifiable pride would pass from the lowest to the highest note in his voice with a fixed and immobile chest. Chaliapin has a greater personality and a more imaginative histrionic genius for the stage, but cannot be compared to Plançon as a vocalist.

It often happens that singers who are gifted

actors and actresses and great interpreters are inferior vocalists. When I advise beginners how to start their studies, the first thing I tell them is to obtain an expert opinion as to whether their voices and temperaments are suitable for purely vocal or for interpretative careers.

An illustration of my meaning is the case of Mary Garden. Had this great artist made the fatal mistake of dedicating her studies and her voice to the operas of Mozart, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, etc., she would probably have achieved only a mediocre reputation; whereas, by an intelligent appreciation of her own limitations, she directed her energy more towards the histrionic and interpretive side of her art, and treated her voice rather as a medium of expression than an instrument on which to play.

In reality there is perhaps no kind of musical career which is so extraordinarily complicated as that of the singer, and especially that of the operatic singer. Instrumentalists have the great advantage in that the instrument upon which they perform is made for them and its quality depends upon the perfection of its manufacture, and not entirely upon the performer. How different things are for the singer! It is not enough for them to be born with a wonderful instrument, but they must have good health and make their lives and habits entirely subservient to the interest of their voices.

As a matter of fact, the human vocal organs form an instrument sui generis, and are, I believe, more complex than any other instrument and infinitely superior and more beautiful than any made by man. If nature had been considerate enough to place the

vocal organs in a position where their functions could be clearly seen and controlled, many of the singers' difficulties would be minimized. But, in a secretive moment, God decided that the voice should be hidden away in the most inaccessible and invisible position in the human body.

Even Emanuel Garcia's remarkable invention of the laryngoscope is of little or no assistance to the actual physiology of singing, although it is of indisputable pathological assistance to the students of the larynx. But heaven help the singer who attempts to base his studies on any auto-examination of the vocal chords! It is even a grave question, to my mind, whether students should ever have their thoughts directed to the anatomy and physiology of their throats. Such a knowledge is obviously useful, if not indispensable to the teacher; but he should use it with the greatest of care, and not allow it to confuse the minds of his pupils.

Because a man has successfully dissected the vocal organs, it does not mean that he has mastered the mysterious laws which control the art of singing. When I was a boy there was a craze in England and America for what is known as "voice production," and it developed a number of teachers who professed to construct voices as easily as penny whistles. Each one of them believed his own theory to be the only right one, and each sentenced his dissenting brother to eternal condemnation. I shared in other men's weaknesses and believed my theory to be perfectly right; but as my experience increased and as my pupils disappointed me, I became convinced that no voice can be created. "Vox nascitur, non fit."

The question all vocal students have to decide sooner or later, is exactly how much instruction can help them in their development and ultimate success. The choice of a teacher may often be the turning point in the career of the singer, and it is impossible to overrate the importance of a decision in this matter.

Personally, I believe it is difficult for anyone to teach singing unless he has himself mastered the art of singing, which enables him to illustrate with his own voice the technique he desires to impart to the student. All scientific theories, as applied to the voice, are useless and confusing unless accompanied by illustration. No matter how great a knowledge the teacher may possess of the anatomy and physiology of the throat, if he is unmusical and incapable of singing a simple song, he will never be able to steer pupils to success. As to the teacher who promises to create a voice where there is none, he should be avoided as a most dangerous type of fanatic, for disaster is sure to follow in his trail. A voice cannot be made, although its parts can sometimes be adjusted, developed and exercised. We cannot make a diamond, or even change its colour, but we can still cut and polish this stone; this process, however, only rendering its colour more pronounced. So it is with the human voice—we cannot create a timbre. It must be pre-existent to any training, and if not there as a gift, nothing on earth can give it.

The exigencies of the operas of to-day differ so widely from those of fifty years ago, that it is doubtful whether the gift of a great temperament is not

more important to the modern singer than the gift of a great voice. It may or may not be a matter for regret, but the type of prima donna who can only stand on the stage and deliver roulades is a thing of the past; and to the majority of musicians, operas like "Lucia di Lammermoor," although containing here and there beautiful melodies, are, on the whole, an insupportable bore.

Hence it is necessary for the student to choose a teacher whose practical knowledge of the operatic stage is such as will enable him to discern whether, in addition to a mere voice, the student possesses sufficient musical intelligence and histrionic talent to interpret the works of modern masters.

One more word of advice I would offer in the choice of a teacher. Beware of men who tell you that you are going to be another Chaliapin, another Caruso, or another Calvé. All imitation is bad art, and the secret of a teacher's success is to discover and develop the individuality of his pupils instead of training them to be inferior reproductions and imitations of a few great personalities.

The difference between those who have a singing voice and those who have none is that the former possess an intangible, imponderable quality of vocal chords termed "timbre." I cannot explain the true meaning of this phenomena any more than could Garcia, Mandl, Muller and other students of the subject. One is sure of its existence, sure of its necessity in the creation of a voice, but ignorant of what it is composed. As a practical worker I have to deal more with the effect than the cause; with the voice, such as it is, such as it should be, and

not with the scientific reasons of its being. With the voice and the public it matters little whether timbre is due to repurcutation, reflection, or inflection, or whether certain cavities or air chambers are placed higher or lower ; but students must know how to use and preserve that timbre, having first discovered that they possess it.

And here I may lay before you a favourite theory. Let me assume that there is someone in the world who enjoys perfect immunity from disease. This Utopian condition means in technical phraseology that every organ in the human system is doing to its full extent, the work assigned to it, and that there is a condition of peace and good-will amongst the constituent parts of the interesting animal whose existence and comfort depend upon harmonious *modus vivendi*. Perfect moral and physical health depend, according to certain political economists, upon an equal division of labour—a scheme dreamt of and tentatively sketched by Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, while Carlyle states that if we do not know that we are the possessors of any particular organ, then and then only do we enjoy perfect health. Moreover, every doctor has to contend with cases in which complications have arisen owing to the imperfect working of some special organ, and the complications have often been treated unsuccessfully because the cause producing them was ignored. Thus the effect has monopolised attention whilst the root of the evil was allowed to remain. Now as the component parts of the human voice are hinged together in the same way as other portions of the body, there is no reason why they should not be subject to the

same laws; and my theory is that a beautiful natural voice will have a beautiful natural emission, providing there has always been a proper division of labour between its parts. In this case the voice will be healthy and developed. Such were the voices of Patti, Mario, Lablache, Albani and others. To them we must look as perfect models that Nature's own hand has made, and I can see no reason why we should not find in the analysis of their vocalization, principles upon which we can develop inferior organs. It may here be argued that that which one voice is capable of accomplishing is impossible to another. Take for instance, the looseness of the jaw and suppleness of tongue—this is a gift, just as some pianists have had natural looseness of wrists; a fact, however, that need not prevent others from attaining through hard work an inferior or similar looseness. My object is to bring before the student the practical bearings of vocalization, and to show him how much one can do and how much one cannot do to aid singers.

I have waded through piles of books and pamphlets on voice production. Each differs—one contradicts the other, and all leave one aghast at the ignorance as to which parts are active and which passive in the act of vocalization. After all, nature is most powerful; the only true art is that which follows closely in her lines. I have often been asked to publish my exercises. Nothing on earth could be more absurd. I have only six, and the two which I mostly use may be found in any five-finger exercise book, whilst the other four are simply phrases of commonplace melody. The whole secret is contained

in the way an exercise is *done*—and not in what it is. The carpenter is more important than his tools. It seems to me that the singing voice bears the same relation to the speaking voice as dancing does to walking. I should imagine that a person whose legs are highly cultivated by dancing would be easy and graceful in walking ; and it is quite certain that the conditions which make a singing voice clear and resonant act upon the speaking voice in like manner. The ancients attached great importance to elocution.

Here one comes to consider the abnormal number of English panic-struck muscles, which seem to have their share in that puritanical propriety of the middle and lower classes forming the British public. Stiff lips, rigid muscles, pronunciation and emission proceeding from somewhere below the fourth button of the waistcoat—an ejaculation of joy expressed by Oh ! of sorrow by Oh !—those are the British modes of exercising lips, muscles and jaw at a wedding, funeral, christening, or on arriving at the North Pole. If it is true that English-speaking people are as stiff in speech as they often are in manners, it is also true that their stiffness in speech is not entirely due to their nature, but also in no small measure to their mother tongue. This tongue, we all know, is a composite babel-like mixture of many tongues, including :

(A) German (high and low) Scandinavian, Dutch, Celtic, Saxon, Gaelic, Aryan—these are all strong consonant dialects only surpassed by Welsh or Russian, in which there is such an abundance of consonants that often one word, emitting but two sounds, such as " extent," requires in ortho-

graphy the assistance of ten, eleven, or twelve consonants. But those two languages, if overladen by consonants in orthography, have boycotted them by making them mutes, therefore, Welsh and Russian are mellow, soft channels of melody.

(B) Latin. In English, of course, there are mute consonants the persistence of which can only be ascribed to the British detestation of change of any sort—" caught," " bought," " nought," should be " caut," " baut," " naut," " faut." But in most cases these consonants persist in making themselves heard with terrible sibillating tenacity. In Latin languages, so-called Romance languages, and more especially in French, the consonants have been sensibly diminished in numbers, and where a word was coined from the Latin, three strict rules were invariably adhered to by the coiners of the popular or everyday form of language.

(1) The loss of medial consonant.

(2) The persistence of the Latin tonic accent.

(3) The suppression of the short vowel.

Advocatum. Avoué. Advocate.

In this way the overwhelming number of derivatives in French are possessed of two forms ; a popular one, which brushes aside surplus consonants and gives full play to all vowel sounds ; and a second series of words called scientific, but only in use for technical purposes, and preserving the original form unchanged. The English language relies on this latter formation from the Latin, and so we find it difficult to compare it favourably from a musical

point of view with one that gives every facility to the exit of the vowel or vocal sounds. One knows that vowel means sound, and sound must include vowel. Five hundred consonants strung together could emit no more sound than a violin or a pianoforte case without strings. It must, therefore, be clear that English singers and speakers start with a natural and inherited disadvantage due to linguistic and climatic influences. But, bearing strictly in mind the fact that art cannot create, they may also remember with advantage to themselves and the public that careful and judicious training and development will modify many deficiencies that would otherwise be an insuperable handicap.

In referring to the practical use of the voice I do not claim to have made discoveries, or to have found a key to unsolved mysteries or a weapon that will conquer unconquerable difficulties.

I do not believe in the Mesmer or the Indian Sequah of voice production, nor in the teacher who makes promises like a parliamentary candidate. But I do believe in the necessity of an institution which will devote itself almost exclusively to the art of teaching singing. If, as Mr. Richard Capell so rightly points out, the problem of opera at the gigantic expense of the great singers is so difficult, the only way to solve it is to do our best to increase the number of such singers. Many will say that there are plenty of musical institutions both in England and America where vocal aspirants can get good tuition. This, however, is not what I mean. Singing in these institutions is merely a branch of general musical education, but the career of a singer,

as I have already said, differs entirely from the career of an ordinary instrumentalist.

A person intending to become a violinist or a pianist, apart from his general musical education, has only to concentrate on playing his instrument as perfectly as possible, whereas, when a singer has mastered the technique of the voice from a command of deep breathing up to the subtlest control of the smallest headnote, her work has only just begun. The art of acting has to be studied, the arts of make-up and costuming—even the art of dancing is rendered necessary by such operas as "Carmen" and "Salomé." The average débutante singer has another great difficulty—the lack of adequate rehearsals. A violinist can prepare himself in an attic for the public platform, but it is not so with the singer. Many a promising débutante has been nipped in the bud by the inability to obtain a sufficient number of rehearsals, and this is particularly the case in English and American opera houses. The continent of Europe is supplied with numerous small opera houses which enable young singers to obtain a sort of post-graduate experience before they appear in the more important opera houses. In Italy and France, for obvious reasons, there is far more generosity in rehearsals than one finds in an opera house like Covent Garden or the Metropolitan.

It is, therefore, clear, I think, that if opera is to become a part of the national life of English-speaking races they must create institutions which are exclusively devoted to the development of their young singers. It would be useless to build and organise hospitals for the sick unless there existed medical

colleges where students receive their education and become qualified doctors. If soldiers, sailors, engineers, doctors, etc., were all educated in one college, I fancy the result to everybody concerned, would be an insufficient special training and yet this is really what happens in most musical institutions, and the branch of music which suffers most as a result is undoubtedly the art of singing.

If, therefore, England and America are desirous of ranking with the rest of the world as operatic centres, they will have to eventually turn their attention not so much to giving opera as to producing singers. It is a fallacy to suppose that there are not plenty of good natural voices to be found amongst the Anglo-Saxons. England has given us such singers as Brahm, Sims Reeves, Edward Lloyd, Ben Davies, Charles Santley, Clara Butt and a host of others. As to Australia, Canada and America, some of the world's greatest singers hail from these countries. It is not, therefore, the raw material which is lacking, but the opportunity for this material to develop and exercise itself in the right environment.

"The scope of leadership which lies before our universities and colleges in the field of dramatic art is great indeed. Its potential fruitfulness can hardly be over-estimated. The value and diversity of the influence which it is open to these seats of learning to exercise in the fulfilment of that mission warrant the active zeal and the most careful and earnest consideration on the part of those with whom rests the function to mobilize and marshal that force," said Mr. Kahn in a recent speech.

English public schools are no doubt admirable

for the formation of character and in the up-building of the nation, but I doubt whether music, or any of the arts, flourish in their midst. At any rate, it is quite certain that singing is not taught, as it should be, to every boy and girl independently of whether or not they have musical talent. If the cultivation of the human voice were made obligatory in the same way as cricket and other sports are made obligatory, it would prove of great benefit to the human race.

The first and foremost advantage of such a proceeding would be that young people would learn to breathe properly; and, sooner or later, the result of the exercise of this vital function in early youth might bring about a decrease in tuberculosis and other affections of the lungs. By the judicious development of the singing voice in youth those who are destined to become clergymen or public speakers of any kind would acquire better and stronger voices and be less liable to need the assistance of the throat specialist.

From the artistic point of view the advantage to the country would be very great; young people would no longer look upon singing as a boring form of exercise and upon singers and musicians as freaks and strange phenomena; but having been taught to use properly their own voices, they would be likely to take a deeper interest in those who have made singing an art.

As things stand at present eighty per cent. of the English-speaking races are more or less indifferent to the art of singing and to opera as a whole. On the continent, and especially in Italy, the man in the street, the peasant who can neither write nor read,

is interested in singers and in operatic singers in particular. These peasants may have good or bad judgment, their criticism may be right or wrong, but they are not *indifferent*, and the appearance of an unknown singer on the operatic horizon is as interesting to the bricklayer in Rome as the name of the Derby winner is to the bricklayer in England. I am not attempting to formulate as to which spirit is best for a nation. I merely say that if, as it appears, the English people are at last desirous of making opera a permanent institution in their midst, they must do so by going to the root of the matter —by educating their children both at home and at school to regard it with interest and respect, and must not themselves look upon it either as a fashionable amusement for the rich or a tiresome form of education. Unless we can inculcate into the youth of England interest, curiosity, and admiration for opera and operatic singing, there is very little hope of ever seeing opera houses built in the wealthy and important cities of England and America in the same way as they have been built in the big, though less wealthy, cities of Europe.

Even in small and comparatively unimportant details the attitude of the British public towards operatic enterprise is totally different from that which one finds on the continent. The word " impresario " in London arouses visions of a gentleman with greasy black curls, a very large nose, huge diamond rings and dirty nails. These visions are not without some slight justification in the past. As opera has never in England been subsidised either by the State or the municipality, it has always been

more or less a commercial speculation; and both London and New York are tempting fields to people who make up scratch opera companies and trust to luck for the rest.

In Russia, Germany and other musical centres it has always been considered an honour to be elected director of an opera house, and only men of culture, distinction and high standing were chosen to fill the position. Before the Revolution the Tsar of Russia, who was personally interested in the welfare of the St. Petersburg Opera House, was very careful in choosing its director. It was the same in Germany. Many years ago I met Count Hochberg, whom the Emperor of Germany appointed Intendant of the Berlin Opera House, a delightful man whose interests were wide and not confined to the box-office receipts.

The protection of the State for opera, however, is not without its disadvantages, I would rather see opera free from the trammels and intrigues of Courts or politics; but even these disadvantages are preferable to allowing opera to be regarded, as it is in England, as a sort of extravagant and superfluous theatrical enterprise. In a great city like London there should be a national opera house with a school attached to it, where talented students might receive free tuition. This institution should receive the same dignified consideration as is shown to the Royal Academy of Arts, and, furthermore, members attached to its staff should be able to add letters of distinction after their names with the same pride as Englishmen now add R.A., B.A., etc.

It has been said that no map of the world is com-

plete without Utopia. Perhaps it would be indulging in too much optimism to hope that such an institution as I have suggested will come into existence during the present generation. Yet the unexpected may happen. England possesses innumerable men whose wealth is great enough to endow a national opera house, were they so inclined, and I think that there are still thousands of people who would prefer to see the youth of the country substitute for the present passion for jazz a more wholesome interest in art.

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